

**Congregational**

**Hand-book**

**JOSEPH SAINTON**

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THE  
**C**ONGREGATIONAL  
**H**ANDBOOK

BEING A GUIDE TO THE

*Administration of a Congregational Church.*

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*PRIZE ESSAY*

BY

JOSEPH BAINTON,

*East Grinstead.*

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LONDON :

CONGREGATIONAL UNION OF ENGLAND AND WALES.

MEMORIAL HALL, FABBINGDON STREET.

—1897—



## PREFACE.

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The Essay here presented was prepared in response to an advertisement offering a Prize for a Handbook setting forth the Methods commonly adopted in the administration of a Congregational Church. The Examiners, who were the Revs. S. Pearson, M.A., of Manchester, Alfred Rowland, B.A., LL.B., of Crouch End, and Eric A. Lawrence, of Halifax, were unanimous in awarding the Prize to this Essay, and in recommending that it should be printed by the Union. The Essay is in the nature of a Directory, but it must be understood that the author is alone responsible for the opinions advanced.

On behalf of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

W. J. WOODS, *Secretary.*





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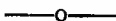
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## INTRODUCTION.



Methods of administration, however important in themselves, are not so vital to the well being of a Church as the principles which should underlie them. The Church is more than its organisation. That which precedes the forms of its activity is the life from which they spring. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that there might be admirable methods of administration, and yet the one essential thing might be wanting, without which a Church of Christ cannot be. Our first question should therefore be not *how* shall we administer; but *what* it is which requires administration.

We have to deal with the forms and activities of a Christian Church. What a Church is, and why it should be Christian, are questions easily answered. A Church is an assembly of Christian people, not drawn together by any fortuitous circumstance; but meeting in obedience to the will of Christ, and bound by mutual confidence and brotherly sympathy, as well as by their common love for the

Lord Jesus. In its ideal perfection, the Church is an assembly in which all are Christians ; and into which, recognised and welcomed, the Master himself comes. Those who make the assembly, must be ruled by the will of Christ, and be filled with His spirit. He must be the absolute Sovereign of their whole life ; and their decisions, on all points, must ever coincide with His. Doubtless this ideal is never wholly realised in actual life ; but it is that towards the attainment of which every faithful Church is striving.

The Church whose methods of work we have to deal with is thus Christian. It is also Congregational. We believe that the Apostolic Churches were self-governing communities, independent of outside control, though subject to the will of Christ ; and that this was in accordance with Christ's own purpose, not for that age only, but for all time. Therefore we accept the Congregational polity as best embodying the ideal in the mind of Christ, and seek to shape our organisation and procedure in harmony with its requirements.

The Pauline conception of the purpose which the Church is designed to serve, is quite in accordance with these representations.

According to that conception, the Church is the visible organisation in which the invisible Christ is made manifest. It is the organ of His manifold activity. Christ is the soul of the Church; the Church is the body of Christ. The Spirit of the risen Lord is first realised and expressed in the life of the Christian community; and from thence it goes forth, in ever widening waves of influence, to enlighten and to bless the world. This is the true glory of the Church and the secret of its power. If it is, in very deed, the organ of Christ—His eyes, to look far and wide over the world, and measure the wants of humanity; His hands, to minister to all human need; His tongue, to speak the message of His love;—then has the Church seized its opportunity, and fulfilled the purpose of its being.

It was needful to touch upon these high and sacred topics, because all the organisation and work of the Church must not only presuppose, but embody them. These are the formative principles which must shape and control the inner life of the Church. Whatever is in harmony with them is admissible. Whatever contradicts them must be excluded. It is sometimes thought that nothing is

admissible in the methods of the Church, for which New Testament precept or apostolic precedent cannot be found. The idea certainly has its attractions. A man feels himself on safe ground when he can justify his conduct by New Testament teaching. But we must discriminate. In His regulations for His Church, Christ has given us great principles, not rigid laws. Principles are eternal; the customs, in which it is sought to embody them, may change from age to age. Many things done in apostolic times could not be done to-day, and many things done now would have been inappropriate or even impossible then. That the Churches of St. Paul's day may not have possessed a Hymn Book, is no legitimate reason why we should not have one now; and in like manner, the probability that in those times all the assemblies of Christians in one city formed a single Church, with one set of ministers presiding over the whole, is not a sufficient reason for adopting the same method of organisation to-day. Slavish imitation of apostolic precedent is not necessary. It is enough, if all our organisation and methods are in full accord with the spirit and purpose of Christ.



## CHAPTER I.

# The Membership of the Church.

### 1. THE QUALIFICATION.

The question, who are to be admitted to the membership of the Church, is one which we have already answered, when defining the Church as Christian. The Church is but the aggregate of its members. If *it* is Christian, *they* must of necessity be Christian too. No other conclusion indeed seems possible. To count all who may chance to come within the walls of a building, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ, is the very negation of the apostolic conception of the Church as the "body of Christ." The Church is to manifest Christ to the world; and we may well ask how it can accomplish this, unless those who compose its membership are themselves Christian. And it cannot be too strongly urged, that it is the bounden duty

of the Church never to deviate from this high standard. None but Christians should ever be admitted to its fellowship.

If however none but Christians are to enter into the fellowship of the Church, we must very clearly define what a Christian is. In this matter it is important to put aside accidentals, and have regard only to what is essential. What is that in a man, which makes him acceptable to Jesus Christ; which admits him to a share in the Christian redemption; and an heir of immortal glory? It is his personal faith in the Lord Jesus, together with all which such faith implies of love to the brethren and surrender to the Master's service. The Church is bound to welcome him whom Christ has already received.

This would seem to dispose of the question whether the Church has the right to enforce any further test. That it has the right to enquire into the Christian character of any candidate for its fellowship and examine into the sincerity of his profession of faith is undoubted. This is implied in the duty of guarding its own integrity. But may it impose a creed, or fix a limit of age?

Congregationalists consistently oppose

enforced subscription to a written creed. Except in the case of Churches whose buildings are held under trust deeds containing doctrinal schedules, no attempt is made to enforce a creed or articles of belief. It is recognised that absolute uniformity of belief is not attainable and would scarcely be desirable if it were. In the investigation of Christian doctrine a man should have the widest freedom, subject only to the sacred claims of truth. Beliefs should be held, not because they are orthodox, but because they are true. This however opens a question which is sometimes of great urgency—how far is it safe to disregard doctrinal differences in the admission of members to the Church? We answer this question in the words of the late Dr. Dale, of Birmingham : “ In the Congregational Churches of this country there is a home—not, indeed, for those to whom the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Prince and Saviour of mankind are doubtful, who have no Gospel to preach, and who ought not to preach till they have one—but for all who are unable to find in any human system of doctrine, in the confessions and creeds of any Church, a satisfactory account of the trans-

cent manifestaton of the love and righteousness of God.”\*

A difficulty is sometimes felt with regard to the age at which young persons may be admitted to a share in the responsibilities of Church life. So far as simple membership is concerned the question is easily answered. As soon as a child is capable of a true personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is eligible for admission to the privileges of Church life. But membership in the Church implies duties and responsibilities; and while it may be readily granted that a child of tender years may be a Christian, it would be a mistake to expect the practical wisdom and impartial judgment which can only come as the result of long experience and varied discipline. Children who love Christ should undoubtedly have a recognized place in the Church; but we need not put upon them burdens too heavy for young shoulders to bear. Let them come to the Table of the Lord, and have a full share as far as their years permit in the social life of the Church; but let them give no vote in the Church Meetings until they have reached a suitable age.

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\* Dale's *Evangelical Revival*, page 269.

## 2. THE METHOD OF ADMISSION.

It will be seen from what has been already advanced, that one grave duty of the Church is to guard well the door of entrance. The faithful in 'Christ Jesus must be accorded a warm welcome, while the unworthy must be rigidly kept outside. We have now to ask how this may best be done.

We have defined the qualification for membership as the possession of a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, together with the love of the brethren and the absolute self-surrender which this implies. The only questions therefore which the Church has to ask, are as to the sincerity of the faith professed, and whether the applicant is living a Christian life. It is obvious that this is a matter in which sympathy and tact are both needful. The inward experiences of the soul are not matters for the rude gaze of the world. Mere curiosity, and the prying of unsympathetic eyes, are out of place here. Yet the Church has a right to ask the question and to test the answer. Those who seek to enter its fellowship must present due credentials.

It used to be a frequent custom, to require

the candidate to write an account of his conversion, a statement of his personal beliefs, and a history of his religious life. This was in addition to several interviews with the minister, and one or two of the deacons. We can easily understand that to some this would be a terrible ordeal; while to others it would present no terrors, though in their case it would be valueless as a test. Young people not accustomed to analyse their own feelings, and with no facility in written composition, would feel themselves confronted by an impossibility; while others, priding themselves on their literary power, would welcome the necessity. There are many no doubt, in whose case such a proposal would be wise. Some are able to speak with the pen, much more readily and effectively than with the tongue, and with equal sincerity. In their case, it may not be unwise to ask them to write down some of their life's experience, for the guidance of the Church; but no such custom should be made an invariable rule. Indeed there should be *no* fixed and unalterable method. There is no part of Church administration in which flexibility is more needful. The method should be such as to

adapt itself to the varying needs of individual cases.

The usual custom, followed in nearly all Congregational Churches, is of course well known. If the candidate is now seeking admission into the Church for the first time; or if, having been a member before, his membership has lapsed, he first of all seeks an interview with the minister. At the Church Meeting next ensuing, the minister, if personally satisfied as to the applicant's fitness, nominates him as a candidate for membership. Two persons of tried character and experience are then appointed to converse with the candidate, to make what enquiries they deem needful, and to report their impressions to the Church. Generally speaking, the rule is followed of appointing women to visit and converse with candidates of their own sex. During the interval between the Church Meeting at which the nomination was received and that following, the candidate is thus subjected to a process of examination and enquiry, which if rightly carried out must ascertain the needful facts; and at the meeting itself, when the minister and the "Visitors" have given their

testimony, the Church is able to give an intelligent vote; and if the decision be favourable to receive the candidate without fear of mistake.

The familiar method thus described is on the whole a good one. It should not, however, be so rigidly followed as to admit of no exceptions. In some cases the testimony of the minister alone may be taken. There are sensitive natures to whom all inquisition is a terror, and who notwithstanding have every wish to bear glad testimony of their love for Christ. Let not our methods, however wise they seem to us to be, prove a stumbling block in the way of timid souls. In such cases the word of the minister will be sufficient. If he is a man of warm sympathy and spiritual insight, he will not fail to gauge correctly the genuineness of the profession made. Sometimes the candidate is so well known to the Church, and has been so closely associated with its work, that the usual personal interview, except that with the minister, may be dispensed with, and the candidate be received at once; the promptness of the whole procedure emphasizing the warmth of the welcome given.



When the candidate is a member of another Church, he applies to the Church he desires to join, which makes application to the applicant's former Church for a "Letter of Transfer;" sometimes—and this is the course to be preferred—application is made direct by the candidate himself. If the transfer is granted and is satisfactory, the candidate is at once received. Only Churches of the Congregational Order issue "Letters of Transfer;" but it often happens that applicants for admission into Church fellowship come from Methodist or Presbyterian Churches, and bring certificates proving that they are members in good standing. These are usually accepted in lieu of formal "Letters of Transfer."

A Church member when leaving to reside in another neighbourhood, should apply as soon as possible for a "Letter of Transfer" to the Church to which he may wish to attach himself. There is danger if a long interval is allowed to elapse that the member's Christian character may lose something of its integrity. In some cases, when the absence is likely to be only temporary, or when a still further removal may be expected, it is well for the minister of the Church, which the member

is leaving, to give a "Letter of Commendation," which can be shown to the pastor of the Church which the member wishes for the time being to attend. This will win him a hearty welcome.

"Letters of Transfer" are sometimes lithographed, or printed in letterpress. It is better, however, that they should be written, as that will admit of variations in details to suit special circumstances. The following is a suitable form for general use :

The Church of Christ, worshipping  
in \_\_\_\_\_, to the Christian Church  
at \_\_\_\_\_; under pastoral care  
of the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_.

BRETHREN,

A.B. who has been in fellowship with  
us for \_\_\_\_\_, wishes to be transferred  
to your communion; and we hereby commend *him* to your confidence, affection, and care. Praying that all grace may abound towards you in your Christian fellowship and work, we are your faithful servants in the Lord.

\_\_\_\_\_, Pastor.

Deacons.

[Add place and date.]

It is a good custom when persons are newly admitted into the Church, or are received by transfer, to give them a welcome before the assembled brethren. This is usually done at the Church Meeting immediately after the vote is taken; but sometimes at the Communion Service next following, the minister gives the right hand of fellowship to the candidate in the name of the Church, and adds a few words of encouragement or counsel, such as may seem appropriate to each case. Needless to say, in every true Church these are seasons of much solemnity, and sacred joy, not only to those who thus take up the Christian profession, but to those who have long been in the service of Christ.

In all Churches a register should be kept of persons received into fellowship. Spaces are marked off for such information as, name, age, residence; whether admitted on profession or by transfer, and if the latter from what Church; when and how membership ceased; by death, discipline, or removal &c.; and also for any special item of interest; as for example whether the member has entered the ministry at home, or abroad; whether he has died in the mission field, &c.

Such a register, if properly kept, must be of very great interest in after years.

### 3. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

One of the essential features of Congregational Church life is the position assigned to the people. The seat of authority is not in the officials of the Church, but in the whole community. All the members of adult age have an equal vote on all questions upon which the Church is called to give its decision. But rights involve duties ; if the right to rule is vested in all the members, so is the obligation to work for the Church's prosperity and growth. The Church member has by no means fulfilled his obligation when he has attended public worship and contributed to the funds.

The responsibilities of Church membership are easily defined ; indeed for the most part they are obvious ; and were it not that they are so often overlooked they would hardly need mention.

(a) The members of the Church are under a solemn obligation to be present as far as possible on all occasions of public worship. None but a very serious reason should be re-

garded as justifying absence. They should come prepared also with a devout mind and prayerful spirit to take a deep personal interest in the several acts of worship. This applies in still greater degree to attendance at the Lord's Table. The Supper of the Lord is the most sacred service of the Church, and one which is accompanied with its own peculiar blessing. Their loss is great therefore, who neglect this act of communion with their Lord.

(b) Each member is bound to cherish a deep personal concern for the prosperity of the Church, and to give practical expression to that feeling in every possible way. In every well ordered Church there will be many activities: every one therefore should select that which is most suited to his talents and circumstances, and devote himself to it with complete personal consecration. To some, of course, these remarks will hardly apply. Mothers of families, overburdened with domestic cares, will perhaps scarcely be able to join the ranks of the workers in the Church. The sick and the aged also may be compelled to stand aside. To these Milton's words may well be applied—

“They also serve, who only stand and wait;”

and not seldom, by their warm sympathy, their fervent prayers, their strong faith, and the joy of their fellowship with Christ, even these may prove an essential part of the Church's strength.

(c) It is of course the duty of all the members to regularly attend the Church Meetings. These are not merely meetings for the transaction of business. The Church at these gatherings seeks to give expression to the mind and will of Christ. Each member therefore should have an intelligent interest in the matters discussed, and should give a vote as a sacred duty, and not without first asking the question "Is this the mind of Christ?"

(d) It need scarcely be said that the members are bound to provide the funds needful for carrying on the work of the Church. True, the general Congregation may be expected to contribute; but the obligation on the part of the members to give of their substance is more sacred and direct.

What the proportion should be everyone must determine for himself. Some would set apart a tenth; but while in many cases this would be a reasonable proportion, in others it

would be either too much or far too little. In our giving to God there should be some degree of sacrifice. The question should be, How much is *due* from me; not, How much *I can most easily spare*. If to satisfy this condition some self-denial is needed, we may be sure that the gift will bring the greater blessing to the giver. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

(e) No duty is more incumbent upon members than to maintain inviolate the corporate life of the Church. They are a brotherhood bound together by strong yet delicate ties; but these ties can only be maintained by a wise and careful observance of the conditions of harmony and peace. There are many dangers which threaten the peace and unity of the Church; and they are all the more serious, because in the beginning they are often so subtle and slight as easily to be disregarded. Human imperfections will assert themselves even in the consecrated life of the Church; but these may be lessened, if not altogether neutralised, if the members will cultivate a spirit of cordial brotherly sympathy observing the Scriptural injunction, "Let each

esteem others better than themselves." Let the brethren be loyal to each other and to Christ, full of genuine sympathy and a broad minded charity. "He that is greatest among you, let him be your servant."

#### 4. DISCIPLINE.

It is the imperative duty of every Church to maintain a high standard of purity in its own life. Every member is under the most solemn obligation to preserve a "walk and conversation" in all ways worthy of the profession of Christ. Neither the Church nor the individual member can set the standard too high. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is the aim set before us; and any departure, however slight, from strict rectitude, either in conduct or feeling, incurs the stern disapproval of the Master, and ought to receive the equally stern disapproval of His people. The obligation which this implies is twofold; there must be the resolute pressing on to reach the highest good, and there must also be the equally resolute rejection of evil.

It is with this latter aspect of the obligation that we have now to deal. Experience shows that it is not enough to guard the door



of entrance into the Church. Strict watch has need to be kept over those within. Human hearts are so weak, and temptations are so many and so strong, that not even the holiest and the strongest are altogether safe; and the moment evil shews itself, it should be destroyed—burnt up in the fires of sorrow, of pity, and of holy indignation. There is no task of Church administration more difficult than this; none that requires more delicacy of feeling, more discrimination and impartiality. One blunder here may destroy a soul.

The recorded censure of the Church should be reserved for serious cases only. Very often there will be need to take notice of inconsistencies of conduct; but if these are such as cause no scandal, they may be dealt with privately. Let the minister, or one of the deacons, or a Church-member whose age and personal character will add to his influence, privately admonish the offender; carefully avoiding all arrogance or censoriousness, and not forgetting that they themselves also are liable to err. In more serious cases, great care should be taken to distinguish between those who have fallen before some sudden and overwhelming temptation, and those who have

followed a persistent course of evil ; and also between those who repent, and those who shew no real sorrow or shame. In all cases where there is an honest repentance, while the Church should very distinctly mark its abhorrence of the sin, it should notwithstanding shield the offending brother with its sympathy and its care. In every case of this kind there should be the utmost tenderness. Those in the Church, whose characters are highest in the regard of their brethren, stand to the repentant brother as the representatives of Christ. They are to give expression to His divine sympathy, and to embody, in their own attitude towards the soul in its sorrow and its shame, the mercy and forgiveness of God. Even when the offence is followed by no apparent repentance, the Church should be slow to take the extreme course of removing the offender from its fellowship. Every effort should be made, by prayer and kindly exhortation, to bring him to repentance ; and only after these efforts have proved ineffectual, should the Church proceed to expel the contumacious member. If a man's heart is hard enough to resist the appeal of brotherly sympathy, and has no feeling of

shame though the whole Church is weeping bitter tears of sorrow over his offence, it is clear proof that he has no place in the Kingdom of God. But this step should not be taken until the necessity is absolutely clear. The word of St. James should be kept in mind, "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."

The method to be followed in these sad cases of discipline is, when the offence is not denied, a simple one. Before anything else is done enquiry should be made, and the facts carefully ascertained. The minister, and one of the deacons, or some other trusted member of the Church, should then seek an interview with the offending brother ; and frankly state what is known while at the same time avoiding the infliction of needless pain. If an open and honest confession is made, and there is a sincere repentance, and also a willingness to leave himself in the hands of the Church, a report of the case may then be made to the Church Meeting, giving a brief outline of the facts, but not too many details, and recommending the Church as to the course to be taken. In most instances all that is needful

will be suspension from the privileges of membership for a certain period ; at the end of which time the Church should receive back the offending brother, with every assurance of its prayerful sympathy ; commending him to the grace of Jesus Christ through whom alone we can withstand temptation.

When the charge is denied, the case requires greater care and circumspection. The first duty in all cases is to ascertain the alleged facts, carefully distinguishing between questions of fact which can be proved, and mere surmises which cannot. The minister and one other suitable person should very early seek an interview with both the accused and his accuser. If the charge is persisted in, and still denied, further enquiry will be needful ; and the accused should come face to face with the person making the charge. In this enquiry, which should be private, the utmost consideration and sympathy should be shown to the accused, and in no case should guilt be hastily assumed. Needless to say, the enquiry should be strictly impartial. In most cases of course the minister will preside, and there should be three or four trusted members of the Church

—deacons or others—acting as assessors with him. The tribunal should be such as to command absolute confidence. The first course will be to hear the accusation, and to receive whatever proofs of guilt are advanced, and then to hear the accused in his own defence. If it should be necessary to examine witnesses, they should not all be assembled in the room in which the enquiry is made, but come in as their testimony is required. When the matter has been fully gone into, the minister and his assessors should retire to consider their verdict. Having decided what this shall be they should return, and deliver their judgment with all seriousness and care. If the accused is clearly innocent, they will of course assure him of the continued confidence and hearty sympathy of the Church. If on the other hand he is proved guilty, they will urge him to confess the fault and to repent. If he persists in his denial, nothing remains but to remove his name from the Church Roll.

Immediately after the conclusion of the enquiry, a statement should be made to the Church at its next meeting of the whole case, and of the manner in which it was dealt with. A resolution should then be proposed, but not

for record on the minutes. There should be as little discussion as possible.

In view of the temptations which belong to business life, and the need there is of maintaining a high standard of commercial morality, a Church will act wisely if it watches very carefully all cases of bankruptcy which may occur among its members. It ought not to be assumed that failure is a proof of dishonesty, and whatever enquiry may be needful should be so conducted as not to give unnecessary pain. In most cases, of course, no independent enquiry will be needful, the investigation by the proper legal authority answering all requirements; but the minister and deacons should take careful note of the facts disclosed, and the aspect which the case presents when the legal investigation is complete. If it is found that the failure is due entirely to misfortune, the Church may express its sympathy and confidence. If it has been caused by neglect or incapacity, the Church may administer a rebuke; but if there be still deeper dishonour, it should express in some emphatic way its stern censure. At all costs the Church must bear a clear testimony on behalf of honesty and fair dealing.

## 5. THE CONGREGATION.

In modern Church life, as might be expected, the members of the Church do not comprise the whole of those who attend its public worship. Religion in a more or less complete degree has become the deep concern of most serious minded men. Even when no profession of faith is made, not a few would feel themselves gravely negligent of manifest duty if they did not take some part in the worship of God. In some cases these are more in number than the members in the Church ; while in others the members may be in a majority. The problem of Church organization is thus somewhat complicated, and questions arise of great delicacy and importance.

When we speak of the Congregation, we do not mean only the attendants at public worship. The Congregation is the whole body of people accustomed to worship in the same place. The first thing that we may say of it is, that it should have a corporate life of its own. When the Congregation is large, and drawn from an extensive area, this may not be easy ; but the result should be aimed at. The individuals which make the whole should not be

so many isolated units ; they should be drawn to each other in a sympathetic brotherhood both of worship and of work. How this may best be done it may not be easy to indicate, the special circumstances of individual Churches being so various ; but there are two obvious needs in every Church. One is the cultivation of its social life, and the other is the application of its power to work. Meetings should be held, as often as may be, of a kind to enable individual members of the Congregation to become mutually acquainted. When there is mutual knowledge, there will in most cases be personal interest, and in some a warm regard. Another means of welding the Congregation into a whole is Work. There is no reason why the work of the Church should be confined to its members. The obligation on their part is no doubt the greater and more imperative ; but Christian work is a means of grace, and a man who begins with work for the Church may soon come to work for Christ. Moreover the workers in a common cause cannot help coming close together. The work is one, and the Master for whom they work is one, hence their sympathies become one, and the many are welded together as a whole.



It must always be the aim of those concerned for the welfare of the Church, to maintain its membership in such proportions, both in number and influence, that the Church proper shall determine the spirit of the whole Congregation. It is no credit to a Church, when the best and most intelligent people who attend its worship are outside. The best should be within. There is something wrong, when the best culture and the strongest moral earnestness are found in the Congregation, but not in the Church. Strong men are needed for the life of the Church, for they are the men whose personal influence is sure to dominate all the rest.

The relation of the Church to the Congregation is not that of a part to a greater whole. Numerically of course it is so, but not organically. The Church stands apart separate and complete, and those in the Congregation who are not of itself represent that part of the world which is in close contact with the Church and is most influenced by its spirit. Hence the Church within the Congregation is "like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." It is from the Con-

gregation especially that the Church should seek additions to its membership. Those who join with it in worship, and are under the influence of the same ministry, should be the special objects of its solicitude. The Church which is strong and faithful, and full of spiritual power, will be sure to attract to itself all those whose hearts are longing for the salvation of Jesus Christ.

The Congregation is naturally and justly asked to contribute towards the funds of the Church. But if they help to provide the funds, have they not some right to a voice in the distribution? The inevitable question arises therefore, 'What share in the administration shall be allowed to the Congregation'? That some share is due is fully and wisely recognized on some special occasions. Whenever there is in contemplation a very large expenditure of money, as in the erection of new buildings, the whole of the congregation is appealed to for a decision upon the scheme. But if there is a right to be recognised on special occasions, is there not also on occasions which are ordinary and constant? The Congregation contribute a share to the funds, should they not therefore have a share in the administration?

If this question is answered in the affirmative, a need is at once created which can perhaps be met by the appointment of a Finance Committee. This Committee should be elected by the whole Congregation—members of the Church and non-members, the latter being seatholders or subscribers, and of course accustomed to attend public worship with some degree of regularity.

Perhaps the most delicate question that can arise in this connection is, whether any and what share shall be permitted to the Congregation in such matters as the election of a minister, or changes in the forms of public worship. It may fairly be said, that if the Congregation provide part of the minister's stipend they ought to have a voice in the choice of the man. Certainly a Church will act wisely, when electing a minister or making some radical change in the form of worship, to consult the feeling of the Congregation. In all these matters, however, the Church should keep the final decision in its own hands. It is to be regretted that in some cases it is not able to do this without relinquishing the use of the building in which it worships, a clause in the Trust Deed expressly placing

the authority in the Congregation. In these cases, the Church should maintain its spiritual life at so high a degree of intensity that it shall have the predominant moral influence. A strong and vigorous Church will without any assertion of authority or claim to rule exert so great an influence that the Congregation will be sure to follow. The chief point is that the Church which holds the higher ideal and is ruled by a nobler law, should take the lead in all moral and spiritual effort.



## CHAPTER II.

### The Ministry of the Church.

The ministry of the Church has long been the battle ground of contending parties. The Romanist refuses to recognise the validity of Anglican "orders"; while the Anglican and Romanist alike deny that the Protestant Non-conformists have any valid ministry at all. For the Congregationalist the question is a simple one. In the Ecclesiastical sense he claims no "orders," and recognizes no "apostolical succession." The call of the Church, recognizing and repeating the previous call of Christ, is sufficient to make a minister; and if this is wanting ordination cannot supply the deficiency.

Strictly speaking, the ministry of the Church appertains to its whole membership, and does not belong exclusively to an official class. Every loyal member of the Church

must be a worker, a servant in active labour of the Lord Jesus Christ. But every community must have leaders; and if the Church is to hold a permanent place in the world, the leaders must not only have recognized positions but fitness as well. Hence there is room for an official ministry, distinct from and yet in harmony with, the general ministry of the whole Church.

In a Congregational Church two orders of ministers are recognized, the Pastor or Bishop, and the Deacon. It is of these that we have now to speak.

#### 1. THE PASTOR.

There is no position in the Christian Church of greater difficulty, or of larger responsibility, than that of the pastor. At the same time there is none in which the joy of success is greater, or in which good work re-acts upon the worker with a more ennobling influence. The pastor's position is one in which none but a sincere and faithful man can win a true success. The bond between a minister and his people is so close that very simple deeds may win him greater influence, or may destroy the influence he already has.

It is not a few brilliant sermons which win for the pastor his influence and authority ; it is the weight of his personal character, the persuasion of his broad-minded sympathy, his sound good sense, and true hearted consecration to the service of the Master. It is almost impossible to overstate the value to the Church of a good and faithful man in the pastorate, or the evil wrought by one who is intellectually or morally unfit. Hence the importance of all questions relating to the pastor, his qualification and duties, and the method of his election.

(a.) THE PASTOR'S QUALIFICATION.

The kind of man to be elected to the pastoral office is not difficult to describe. The real difficulty is to *find* the man possessing all the needful qualifications. First, he must be a Christian. To any else the position has but few, if any, charms. Only to a man sincerely devoted to Christ, and the service of his fellows, will the position reveal its opportunities, and become attractive. But this by itself is not enough. He must not be a man content with the ordinary levels of Christian attainment. He must cherish the very loftiest ideals of life,

and strive with a passionate earnestness to realise them in himself. Jesus Christ must be the central force of his life, the master passion of his soul. He must be a man "full of the Holy Ghost."

There are intellectual qualifications also which are essential. He must know how to preach. That the pastor should have the faculty of public speech may be almost taken for granted. He is utterly out of place if he is wanting in this. He should possess all the physical and mental qualities which go to make an effective speaker—a clear voice, a ready utterance, a logical arrangement of thought, and a careful if not polished diction. Sermons, whether read or delivered free from the trammels of a manuscript, should not be mere disquisitions, but should have all the life and fire of a direct address to the people. The man who enters the pulpit must not only know how to inform the mind, but also how to stir the heart. To do this, he must know how to place himself in touch with his audience, and have some small share, at least, of the mystic power of eloquence.

No pastor will be able to do his work well unless he is a good scholar. No doubt it



sometimes happens that a man with no real claims to scholarship will do a good and successful work in the ministry, but these cases are so exceptional that they must not be allowed to fix the rule. There can be no doubt that a regular College training, if not absolutely indispensable, is of such immense value that a man should hesitate long before entering the ministry without it. For the pastor requires much special knowledge and training such as he will hardly be able to get elsewhere than at a Theological College. A minister is at a tremendous disadvantage unless he has diligently gone over at least a large portion of the wide field of theological study. For the pastor must also be a teacher. He is not only a leader in the social life of the Church, and the organizer of its work; he is also the guide and helper of his people, in their doubts, and mental difficulties.

There is one qualification for the ministry which is often overlooked. The pastor must be a leader of men. He must have the force of character, the strength of will, the clearness of practical judgment, the ready tact, and the sustained enthusiasm which enable a man to

stand in the forefront of his brethren and win their confidence and co-operation. This is a matter of great importance, especially in the Congregational ministry. There is no artificial sanctity in the pastor's position. He is not a priest wielding supernatural powers, and having access to mysteries denied to common men. Men appraise him at his real worth. If he is a strong man they will welcome his leadership. If he is a weak man, they are sure to take the reins of power into their own hands.

The true pastor is a man of Christ's own choosing. No man who has entered the ministry merely because it is a respectable profession is worthy of his post. Nor is he simply the elect of the Church, for the Church has no business to elect a minister whom Christ has not called. But how shall a man know that he is called? How shall the Church recognize the divine anointing? Is he a man well qualified in all physical and mental requirements? Is he conscious of a divine compulsion, that will not allow him to stand aside? Has he a message to deliver, and is the deepest feeling of his soul, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel"? If these

things are true of him, then and only then may he be accounted a minister of Christ. It is sound advice to a young man, not to enter the ministry if he can help it. The man who can with a clear conscience decline to preach had better do so. What is wanted, is the man who cannot help preaching, who enters the ministry because he must, and who feels the burden of the Lord's message so strongly that he dare not be silent. ,

(b.) THE PASTOR'S ELECTION.

It is perhaps not surprising that many Churches when electing a pastor should make mistakes. But there are very few tasks, which the Church has to undertake, in which mistakes are more serious. When a Church is without a minister, a very heavy responsibility is thrown upon the deacons; and the greatest care and circumspection are required to prevent disaster. A very common method followed is a good illustration in the circumstances of "how not to do it." A number of men are invited to preach on successive Sundays for one or two months. As soon as they begin to arrive, another list of equal length is in course of preparation; and when the second is finished

another list is ready, and so on for an indefinite period. Should one of these preachers impress the Church as the very man they are seeking there will be no opportunity of hearing him again, until perhaps two or three months have gone by. In the meantime other preachers have come, and other impressions have been made, with the result in the experience of not a few Churches that the people become critical and very reluctant to make a choice ; until at last growing weary of the bewildering variety, and tired of a new sensation every Sunday, they hurry to elect the last man heard.

As soon as the pastoral office is vacant, the Church should meet for special prayer. Those who have to direct the Church should be particularly careful to impress upon Church and Congregation the sacredness of the duty ; and especially that they have simply to find out, and give effect to the choice of Christ.

The deacons, as soon as the vacancy is known, are sure to have laid before them the names of ministers willing to be invited as candidates. From the names submitted to them, together with others they themselves might choose, the deacons should carefully

select the most suitable. The list should be arranged as far as possible in the order of preference, and should be revised as other names are added and fuller knowledge obtained. It need hardly be said that full enquiry should be made before any of these men are asked to preach ; and much will be gained if one or two of the deacons arrange to hear him in his own pulpit, should he be already in the ministry. If a student is in question, the testimony of the College Principal will be helpful. Having made these enquiries with much care, the deacons will be in a position to invite some of the ministers on this list to visit their Church, and to preach before the Congregation. It will be well to invite one only at a time, filling up other Sundays as needful with ministers who will not regard themselves as candidates. If the impression made is unfavourable, let another be asked to preach, and so on, until a favourable result is obtained. When once the impression made is the desired one, let the minister be invited, at an early date, to repeat his visit—this time for two consecutive Sundays; remaining, if possible, during the intervening week. In all these arrangements, the greatest care should

be taken to avoid the possibility of rival candidates. The Church should never be thinking of the claims of two men at the same time. If the impression made by any candidate is so far favourable, as to secure for him the possible suffrages of a large part, but not the majority of the Congregation, let a sufficient interval elapse before another candidate is invited; and the list of preachers should be so arranged that if the impression made is sufficiently favourable to warrant a further visit, there shall be no impending engagement with a preacher, who is likely to prove a rival candidate.

If the indications point to an unanimous feeling in favour of a candidate, the deacons will, as soon as possible, call the Church together for a decisive vote. The notice calling the Church Meeting should be strictly according to rule. Many Trust Deeds give directions as to how the meeting should be called, and these should be carefully followed. At the meeting itself, the voting should be *by ballot*. Papers should be distributed, on which the words are printed "Do you wish that Rev. A— B— be invited to become the pastor of this Church?" The answer should

be a simple "yes" or "no." It has sometimes happened that two names have been submitted to the Church. This should *never* be done. Not only do self-respecting Ministers abhor such rivalry, when it is thrust upon them, but it is almost sure to be inimical to the harmony of the Church. It is moreover unfair to the minister elected, for if he accepts the pastorate, he does so at grave disadvantage, which will probably cling to him during his whole ministry in that Church. If the vote of the Church is favourable, a cordial invitation should at once be sent. The vote, to be favourable, ought to be unanimous or nearly so. If there should be a considerable adverse minority, it is a grave question whether the invitation should be sent; and if sent, it certainly ought not to be accepted. A minister accepting an invitation under such circumstances, does so at grave risk of failure. He is crippled at the very beginning; and instead of having the cordial sympathy of the whole congregation, he is exposed to the hostility of a considerable part.

In all dealings with candidates, the utmost frankness should be observed. It is not right to assure a man positively that his candidature

is sure to issue in an invitation, until the deacons have properly tested the feeling of the Church. Moreover when the invitation is actually given, there should be great frankness in stating the whole facts. A minister ought not to have occasion to say, that he was misled by the reticence of the deacons in regard to things which ought to be known. If there is a minority voting against him ; or if the decision of the Church, though practically unanimous, is wanting in cordiality ; or if the amount of the stipend is problematical, the whole facts should be stated. The deacons ought not to shrink from this, for fear of giving pain to the candidate himself, or offence to those who are strongly in his favour. Nor should they be actuated by the fear that if this man does not accept the invitation, they will still have to bear the heavy responsibility of guiding the Church, which by this time, perhaps, has grown to be a burden. At all costs they must be straightforward and fair.

(c.) THE PASTOR'S DUTIES.

It may justly be said, that a pastor's duty should begin with himself. His position is one of much isolation. He preaches to



others ; who will preach to him ? There are moral dangers, incident to his work, which are known to none so clearly as to himself. In dealing with spiritual themes so constantly, how easily he may lose the sense of their sacredness ! How quickly also may unsuspected insincerity find its way into conduct and speech ! He who above all things should be true, may find himself speaking that which he only half believes, or softening down some aspects of the truth, lest they give offence. And the pastor knows all this, better than most men ; and, if he is wise, will strive to live in close fellowship with his Lord, for so only will he guard against the dangers which lie so thick about his path.

The minister himself will not need to be told that one of his duties is reading and study. If he is not altogether out of his right place, he will already have formed the habits, and acquired the aptitudes, of the student. There are perhaps few people who understand that one of the imperative needs of a minister's life is time and opportunity for quiet and earnest study. That he must prepare sermons they are of course ready to acknowledge ; but that he is under the

necessity of following definite courses of study, and of mastering fresh fields of knowledge, they do not so well understand. Not seldom a congregation grudges the time which the pastor spends "over his books." "Let him be out and about," they say. If the pastor is wise, he will insist upon having time for study ; and, while neglecting no duty, will carefully guard against allowing his time and strength to be frittered away on trifles.

Pastoral visitation is a subject on which it is difficult perhaps to determine the golden mean. The question, however, is one which the pastor must decide for himself, and that not according to personal inclination but in full view of the necessities of his position. One thing is imperative, he must not neglect the sick or the sorrowful. In the sick chamber, and in the house of mourning, his presence must be as sunshine, his wise true sympathy the assurance of the compassion of God. In every case of sorrow and distress he must hold himself to be the messenger of comfort and of help. If he is not able to be a frequent visitor in their homes, other means must be adopted for bringing pastor and people into close personal relation.

It will not be questioned that one of the most essential parts of a minister's duty is to "watch for souls." He must strive to win men for the service of Christ. He must watch with jealous care over those already won. In this work, he will find his most sacred joys, and most likely also, his bitterest disappointments. He must never despair of men.

The most characteristic work of the pastor is preaching. To this, he must give his utmost strength. Whatever else is left undone, this must not be slighted. To preach is the grand work of his life. The pastor who fails in this fails in all. Woe to that minister who has misused his opportunities! If a man is to preach well, he must give himself to it with all his strength of mind and heart. It must be no mere pastime. He must put into it all the best work of which he is capable. This is work which, if done perfunctorily, is not done at all. The words of the preacher must come hot from his own heart. But such preaching implies full preparation. If the preacher's words are to be hot, his own heart must be kindled to a living warmth by close study and patient thought.

*(d)* THE PASTOR'S DISMISSAL.

It is a matter for real thankfulness that the cases are not likely to be many in which the sad necessity will arise of dismissing the pastor. Such cases however there may be, and in dealing with them the greatest care is needful. A Church can scarcely have to deal with a matter more delicate, or with one in which it is more difficult to act with wisdom. The feeling involved is often unavoidably so great as to make it difficult for those concerned to act with sufficient discrimination and self-restraint. Whether dealing with mere indiscretions, or with grave misconduct, sorrow and pity should always mingle with just indignation. There should be no blind fury, but the measured steps of justice.

Nothing should ever be done to disturb a pastor's position, except under the pressure of stern necessity. It has sometimes happened that a few individuals in a Church have for some personal reason resolved to drive a minister from his place, and have not scrupled to use every influence they possessed to secure that object. It should be fully recognized that all effort of this sort is not only a personal wrong done to the minister,

but is distinctly an act of treachery to the Church itself. Whenever a conspiracy of this sort is discovered, the Church as an act of self-preservation should promptly stamp it out. It should never be supposed that it is a matter of no importance; that, if one minister is driven away, another can easily be found to fill his place. Such ideas are not only a degradation of the ministry, but destructive of the very life of the Church.

If a minister should be guilty of any gross act of immorality, or of any such conduct as will bring public dishonour to the Church, it will be well for the deacons to act promptly and decisively. If the man is proved guilty, he must surrender his pastorate at once, no matter how deep his sorrow or how true his repentance.

In less serious cases the Church can afford to be patient and forbearing, and may wisely give the minister time, either to seek another charge, or to arrange his affairs with a view to entering some other path of life. In all serious cases some such procedure should be followed as was described under the head of "DISCIPLINE;" but as, in the case of a minister, public attention is most likely to be

aroused, and any serious mistake to have disastrous results, it might be wise in most instances to call in the advice of the minister and deacons of some neighbouring Church, or of the officials of the County Association. This should not be done with the idea that anyone outside the Church has a *right* to interfere, but only as a safeguard against any serious mistake. In all cases of difficulty, characterized by complexity and doubt, such outside help may be invaluable. It would be well for every County Association to appoint, as is done sometimes, an Advisory Committee to whom appeal might be privately made.

## 2. THE DEACONS.

The deacons in a Congregational Church hold a position in very close relation to the pastor. They are his council of advice, his co-workers in the ministry of the Church. Unlike the pastor, they are mostly engaged during the week in the usual avocations of business ; but they are nevertheless a most important and necessary part of the Church's ministry. As a whole, they are a body of men for whom the Church has good reason to

be thankful. They are a valuable support to the Church ; and not seldom its mainstay and guide, in dark and troublous times. The question, what sort of men should be selected for the office of deacon, is a most important one. The duties assigned to them are so various, that it seems essential that they should be men of different and complementary talents. When men of diverse gifts are brought together, what is wanting in one is compensated for by what is found in another. The deacons should not be all alike, but men of different capacities, each one of whom may be able to utilize his own special gift in the service of the Church.

In some of the early Independent Churches an office was recognized, which seems now generally to have passed out of use. It was that of the "Ruling Elder," whose position was intermediate between that of the pastor and of the deacons. The question has been raised, whether it would not be well to revive this office. If that were done, it would be the special duty of the "Elder" to assist the pastor, in all that pertains to the spiritual life and work of the Church ; while the deacons would have the care of its financial concerns,

be the custodians of its buildings, and the almoners of its bounty. The need, however, is for the most part met by selecting men for the diaconate, each of whom is capable of serving the Church in one of the ways needful, whether of government, or of the management of its material concerns. In most Churches there are men of some force of character and ardour of spiritual life, with the capacity of leadership, and the power of inspiring other men with the same faith and holy zeal which animate their own hearts; and at the same time there are men, perhaps generally speaking of humble capacity, who are yet able to bring to the work business tact, knowledge of the world, and sound common sense. If some of each—men of spirit and power, and men of practical sagacity and skill—are appointed to office, the Church will not be badly served.

In all cases, deacons should be Christian men of tried capacity and personal character. They should be men of deep piety, living much in fellowship with Christ, and deeply concerned for the honour of His Church. They ought also to be men of unblemished reputation in the world outside, men who provide things honest in the sight of all, and who conduct



their business on principles which will commend themselves to the Christian conscience : they should also be good citizens, as well as faithful members of the Church.

But must the deacons always be "men"? In view of the place that women now take in so many departments of public life, it becomes a needful question, whether they should not be elected to a place in the diaconate. We know that there were deaconesses in some of the early Congregational Churches ; a notable example being that deaconess, in the exiled Church of the Pilgrim Fathers, of whom Governor Bradford gives so kindly a description. Moreover, godly women are amongst the most faithful and efficient workers in the Church. Cases not seldom arise which it is not desirable that a man should deal with, and which can be dealt with much more effectively by the tact and sympathy of a Christian woman. True, much of this work is already done by women ; but the fact of there being an essential need in the Church for women's work, would suggest the desirability of giving, to some at least of those who do that work, an official position.

It is not perhaps material, whether

women are elected to the regular diaconate, or whether the "deaconesses" have a position and a work of their own. In most cases the latter course would probably be preferred.

Some points of interest and importance remain to be considered.

(a.) THE DEACON'S TENURE OF OFFICE.

In former times the deacons were generally elected for life, the tenure of office being terminated only by resignation, or death, or such conduct as would unfit a man for prominent place in the Church. In more recent times, however, the frequent custom is to elect the deacons for a term of one, two, or three years. There are advantages and disadvantages in both methods.

Some grave disadvantages should not be overlooked. The office loses something by frequent changes. There was a dignity in the old idea of a life-long service in the Church. The periodical election tends to reduce the diaconate to a mere committee; and to obscure the idea, if not to obliterate it, that the deacon, as well as the pastor, is a man called of Christ to his office. Occasionally, also, there may be a lessening of independence. A man who

must soon offer himself for re-election may be tempted to think too much of possible votes. Sometimes the best man in the diaconate, the staunchest friend of the minister, the wisest adviser of the Church, through a mere passing wave of adverse feeling, fails to secure election. Sometimes, also, the election occurs at a time which for various reasons is undesirable, yet being fixed by rule, there may be no means of postponing it.

In some Churches the whole of the deacons are re-elected every year. In some cases also, the rule obtains that those who go out of office are not eligible for re-election until a whole year has elapsed. Neither of these customs can be recommended. An election of deacons is always more or less a critical event in the history of a Church; and it is well, as far as possible, to minimize the degree of disturbance. Nor is it wise to set up a barrier to the re-election of any; in this way the pastor will often lose the immediate help of the men on whose sympathy and co-operation he can most confidently rely.

A much better plan is to appoint such a number of deacons, that a definite proportion may retire each year, but be eligible for

re-election. Should the total number be six, then two would retire annually; those in the first instance retiring for whom the fewest votes were given. The advantage of this plan is, that continuity is secured in the diaconate; and there being, as a rule, only two vacancies to fill, the election itself is less disturbing to the Church and a cause of less anxiety to those most deeply concerned for its progress and well being.

(b.) THE DEACONS' ELECTION.

The election of deacons should be so conducted, both as to method and spirit, as to keep in prominence the spiritual side of this as of all Church transactions. It need hardly be said, that prayer should enter largely into all the arrangements.

The method of election varies in different Churches. In some cases the pastor and the deacons already in office submit to the Church such names as they deem suitable; any member present at the Church Meeting having the right to add names to the list. The vote is then taken either by show of hands or by ballot. The selection is, of course, confined to the persons nominated, who are in this case no

more than are needed to fill the vacancies. It ought to be distinctly understood that no one should be considered elected unless a sufficient number of votes (two-thirds of those present) be recorded in his favour. A less desirable method is to throw the nomination entirely open; in which case the nomination should close, if not before, when there are twice the number nominated for which there are vacancies to be filled. If this method be followed, voting by ballot will avoid many difficulties, the members present writing on a slip of paper the names of those whom they wish to be elected.

The following rules may also be found useful—

(a.) On a convenient Sunday prior to the Church Meeting at which the Election is to take place, an announcement should be made from the pulpit, inviting nominations, and giving the following particulars :—the date of the Church Meeting, the names of the retiring deacons who are eligible for re-election, the number of vacancies to be filled, and the date at which nominations are to be sent. The same announcements in writing should be set up in the Church lobby.

(b.) All nominations should be in

writing and should be signed by those making them. They should not contain more names than there are vacancies to fill. None but Church members should either nominate or vote at this Election.

(c.) All nominations should be sent to the pastor or Church secretary. If the names given be equal in number to the vacancies requiring to be filled (if less, the pastor and deacons should make up the requisite number, by adding those they deem worthy and who are willing to serve) the list should be reported to the Church Meeting ; and a resolution proposed, seconded, and voted upon, that the persons so nominated be elected to fill the office of deacon. The vote in this case may either be open or by ballot, at the discretion of the Church.

(d.) If the persons nominated exceed the number of vacancies, the list should be printed, and a copy given to each Church member. These voting papers should be collected at the Church meeting ; each paper having previously been properly marked. No greater number of votes should be given than there are vacancies to fill. The papers should be unsigned.

(e.) The Church should at once appoint two scrutineers, neither of whom should be a candidate at the Election. It should be their duty to count the votes, and report the result to the Church. The counting might be done in an adjoining room while the Church meeting is in progress.

(f.) The persons who have received the highest number of votes, should be declared elected. Should one of these decline to serve, the name on the list having the next highest number of votes should be taken; but only in the event of his having such a number of votes as gives evidence of his having the confidence and esteem of the whole Church. Should that not be the case, then an open nomination may be made in the meeting itself, and a vote immediately taken.

(g.) If any of the vacancies should have been occasioned by causes other than retirement according to rule, those persons elected, who have the least number of votes, should be regarded as appointed to fill such vacancies, and to be due to retire, at the time those persons would, whose place they take.

(h.) In announcing the names to the Church meeting, it is not necessary to give

the number of votes in each case, or the names of those not elected. The information, however, should be given if asked for by the meeting.

(i.) As soon as the result of the Election is known, and the persons chosen have signified their willingness to serve, they should be set apart by a solemn service of prayer and exhortation. Let the pastor welcome them to their office, in the name of the Church ; and let prayer be offered, that strength and wisdom may be given them for the discharge of those high and important duties which the position of deacon involves.

(c.) THE DEACONS' DUTIES.

The first duty of the diaconate is to assist in the government of the Church. Autocratic rule is not, and should not be, conceded to the pastor. It is his place no doubt to rule, but not as a despot ; and he rules best, who governs the Church in full accord with the deacons, and in such a way as to command their entire sympathy and co-operation. The pastor and deacons together form the governing body, and that Church is well ruled in which pastor and deacons are of one heart and one



mind. The prosperity of the Church, consequently, lies as much in the hands of the deacons, as in those of the minister. As they are the first to whom the pastor submits his plans of new work, &c., they can do much to encourage or to hinder ; to make success sure by wise suggestion, or failure inevitable by unfriendly opposition. Oftentimes it is in their power to perfect plans, which would be otherwise ineffective ; to strengthen their pastor's work, on that side on which it is weakest, as well as to take their share in the initiation of fresh methods of work, and new enterprises of usefulness.

The deacons may be said to be the guardians of the minister. The position of a Christian pastor is somewhat singular. His relation to his people is not that of a servant to a master, yet he depends for his maintenance upon their free-will contributions. He is, in spiritual things, their guide and counsellor. It is his duty to warn, to rebuke, to exhort, to instruct ; and yet the relation of the Church to him is one of perfect freedom. The position, moreover, has its peculiar dangers and difficulties, many of which are unknown in business life. He is sometimes

made the victim of weak-minded women, and of designing men. Sometimes his inexperience of the world leads him into difficulty. In a very real sense the deacons have the pastor in their keeping. They should be a guard about him to defend him from the tongue of slander, to smooth away difficulties that his inexperience or even his indiscretion may have caused, to stand between him and hostility, whether from within or from without the Church, and in all possible ways to uphold and sustain him in his work.

In Churches which have no Finance Committee, the obligation rests upon the deacons of managing the financial concerns of the Congregation. The deacons should make it their business to see that the pastor is not troubled by financial anxieties through any neglect on the part of the Church. It should be borne in mind that cares of this sort interfere very seriously with his efficiency; they take from him much of his strength, and tend by depressing his spirits to give a sombre hue to his preaching. Nor should he be grudged a comfortable maintenance. Moral and spiritual help cannot be paid for in pounds

sterling. Nor will he ask for payment. A maintenance is a necessity, and he will not ask for more, especially if he has good reasons for believing that his people are dealing with him in a generous and loving spirit. Let the deacons see that the stipend is paid the very day on which it becomes due. Care on this matter will often save the minister, and still more perhaps the minister's wife, much trouble and disappointment.

The great value to the Church of a good and faithful diaconate is perhaps most plainly seen when there is a vacancy in the pastorate. Many of the duties of the minister devolve upon them. They are then the leaders and guides of the people, and it is their place to see that the Church suffers no slackening of energy or loss of harmony. It is their duty also—a most solemn and difficult duty—to assist and guide the Church in the selection of a minister.

The work of the diaconate should be so distributed that each should have for himself an assigned duty. It is usual to appoint a Secretary and a Treasurer. The first of these will keep the minutes of all meetings of the diaconate, and act also as secretary of the

Church ; conducting all the correspondence, and superintending generally the business. He should see that the proper notices are written for the pulpit, and take charge of any communications that have to be made to the members of the Church, or the general Congregation. The treasurer, as his name implies, should have charge of all funds, except those for which special treasurers are appointed. It is his duty to keep careful accounts, to give receipts, and to make the needful payments. Very much of the peace and harmony of the Church depends upon the manner in which his work is done. Slipshod accounts are a discredit to him and a danger to the Church. Let the accounts be carefully kept, properly audited at the end of the year, and duly reported to the Church. As the secretary and treasurer act in that capacity for the whole Church it is sometimes the custom to appoint them at a Church meeting. Let the deacons nominate their officers and ask the Church to confirm the appointment by a vote.

All the other deacons should have some office. One of them, with the needful knowledge and practical skill, should act as general superintendent of buildings, overlooking the

work of the caretaker and having charge of the arrangements for lighting, heating and ventilation of buildings. He should be responsible also for repairs. Another most important duty is to take charge of the doors at public worship, and of the arrangements for shewing strangers into seats. This is sometimes done by the caretaker, but it can always be more gracefully done when those who undertake the duty are men held in confidence and esteem by the whole Church.

In addition to all these duties of administration the deacons will often find opportunity of doing work of a more distinctively spiritual nature. They may visit the sick, the poor and the aged. They may call upon the disaffected and smooth away differences. They may sometimes take charge of mission stations and preside over a branch Church. In many ways they may work for the establishment and growth of the Church which they are called to serve.

#### *d.* THE DEACONS' MEETINGS.

There are few more important meetings of the Church than that at which minister and deacons meet for private conference. It is then that business is put into shape for the Church

meeting that follows, and matters are decided affecting in many ways the comfort and well-being of the whole community. It is highly important that these meetings should be pleasant and agreeable, as well as efficient for their special purpose. Mischief has often arisen from angry debates, the memory of which has long rankled in the minds of those who were present, and has sometimes borne bitter fruit in after days. Difficult questions must be dealt with at times, and serious differences of opinion cannot always be avoided, but such differences ought not to be allowed to destroy or even to lessen the friendship of Christian brethren. Some danger lies in the fact that the meeting is private. Naturally enough, greater freedom of speech is possible than in a more public gathering, but the freedom is one which needs to be guarded. Courtesy and mutual respect must never be lost sight of. A wise self-restraint will guard against many dangers.

At the deacons' meeting the pastor should when present preside, and the proceedings always begin and close with prayer. The religious character of the meeting must always be kept well in view. The presence

of Christ is as essential in the deacons' meeting as in the larger assemblies of the Church.

The proceedings of this meeting need not, of course, be quite so formal as in more public gatherings; but they should be prompt and businesslike, and there should not be too much of informal conversation especially on irrelevant topics. The secretary will record in a Minute Book all formal resolutions and all questions kept open for future discussion. The minutes of the previous meeting should always be read, and if approved, signed by the chairman in the presence of the brethren. If any matters arise out of the minutes they should be dealt with first. Correspondence should then be read and considered. The business to be dealt with at the Church meeting should be considered and put into shape with very great care. It is not wise to bring before the Church any proposals which are not well matured, and in regard to which minister and deacons are not practically agreed. All plans of work, and especially of new enterprises, should be considered with great thoroughness and care in the deacons' meeting. This will lead to a

great saving of time, and will go a long way towards securing success.

It will sometimes happen that questions of great delicacy will arise, such as are not fitting or desirable for discussion in an open meeting. These should be carefully considered by the minister and deacons in their private meeting, and if possible disposed of. Moreover, it is well so to shape all business to be laid before the Church Meeting, that as little division of opinion as possible may arise.

It should be quite understood that the proceedings in the deacons' meeting are confidential. Much of the value of this meeting is in the freedom afforded by its privacy ; but evil must necessarily arise if what transpires within, is repeated to those outside. The seal of confidence, therefore, should never be broken. In some cases, a Church Meeting has demanded information as to the transactions of a particular meeting. Compliance with this demand is nearly always wise, and sometimes necessary ; but it should go no further than the production of the minutes of the meeting in question. The deacons' Minute Book should never be open to general inspection.



An important question sometimes arises, as to how far a minority in the diaconate is bound by the decision of the majority, when a matter which has been discussed in the deacon's meeting, afterwards comes before the Church. At times, a deacon objecting to a decision of his brethren is placed in a position of some delicacy. If the question in debate be one of detail, involving no principle, he should certainly let it pass; but if it be of sufficient importance to compel opposition, he may gain freedom of action by frankly giving notice of his intention to oppose the resolution in the Church Meeting. A deacon should never raise *unexpected* opposition in a Church Meeting on any question which his brethren may have considered, even though their decision may have been taken in his absence, or in opposition to his personal vote.

### (3) THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

The executive of the Church, as we have hitherto defined it, consists of the pastor and the deacons. This is the almost universal usage of Congregational Churches. It is sometimes however thought advisable to associate with them persons elected by the general

Congregation, to form a Finance Committee. Whenever this is done, the pastor and deacons should be members of the Committee ex-officio, and should, in all cases, be a majority. The rules as to election may be similar to those adopted in the case of deacons ; or the pastor and deacons may nominate, the election by the people taking place at the Annual Meeting of the whole Congregation. It will conduce to harmony and simplicity of work, if the person who is secretary to the Church, holds the same office in this Committee.

The work of the Committee should be confined to matters of finance and the care of buildings. It should have nothing to do with the spiritual concerns of the Church, with questions of doctrine, of Church polity, or of forms of worship. It may, however, decide all matters of income and expenditure, such as the methods to be adopted for raising funds, the stipend of the minister, and the salaries of paid officers generally. The treasurer will, of course, act under its direction, and it will be responsible for seeing that the accounts are accurately kept, and duly audited ; and that a full report is made of the financial position at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation.

This Committee also should see that the buildings, and their furniture, are kept in good condition, have needful repairs executed, and have charge of any alteration or enlargement of the material structure. It may be also its business to appoint the caretaker, to define his duties, and superintend his work.

It will be seen, that when such a Committee exists as is here described, its relation to the diaconate will be very close. Without great care the duties of the one may easily run into those of the other. It will be needful, therefore, to define very clearly the duties and responsibilities of the Committee, and the limits within which it shall be confined.

#### (4) THE CHOIR.

The organization and work of the choir may conveniently be dealt with here, as one of the important ministries of the Church. The choir is an institution which is often most difficult to manage, yet, if a good one, well worthy of all the trouble involved. To make it a real help to the psalmody of the Church, much interest must be taken in its membership, organization, and work, by the minister and officers of the Church. A good choir adds much to the interest

and usefulness of the worship, and is worth all the trouble and expense it may involve. If it is in full sympathy with the aim of the Church, it may be of great service ; if that sympathy is lacking, it is sure to be a hindrance.

The members of the choir should be selected with care. All comers should not be received without discrimination. To have a seat in the choir should be a privilege and an honour. Only those should be admitted who have a good voice and an earnest desire to aid the church in its psalmody, and who at the same time are persons of strictly upright conduct, if not decidedly of Christian character. Persons of doubtful integrity should be excluded, whatever other qualifications they may possess. It is desirable also that all members should have a good knowledge of music ; though it will be found advisable, at times, to admit recruits whose musical training is defective, but who are likely, as the result of instruction, to make fairly good singers.

Every choir should have a choirmaster and an organist ; and, if it be large and active, it may need a secretary. In many choirs the organist is also the choirmaster, and it is much debated whether this is not in all cases the

better plan. There are, however, great advantages in the two offices being kept distinct. The organist, if he has to accompany, cannot at the same time so well train the choir ; and it seems better if a good leader can be obtained, with the requisite musical talents and the faculty of leadership, to appoint him to be choirmaster, the post of organist being filled by another person. As the name implies, the choirmaster should be at the head, both organist and choir acting under his direction; indeed, if he is a man well qualified for his post, not only having musical ability, but a hearty sympathy with the spirit and purpose of congregational worship, it may be well for all in the Church to follow his lead in what pertains to his department of work. It is of course, essential that he should work in perfect harmony with the minister, on whom the responsibility for the conduct of public worship ultimately rests. The minister may, perhaps rightly, defer to the choirmaster on questions of musical taste and execution ; but the choirmaster should cheerfully defer to the judgment of the minister, when the question arises as to what is appropriate to Christian worship generally, or suitable to the needs, or the capability, of the particular congregation.

In every case, the minister should select the hymns; while, as a rule, the choirmaster should determine the tunes.

The position which the choirmaster holds is one so important to the well-being of the Church, that while the choir itself should be consulted as to his selection, the choice should be made by the minister and deacons, if not by the vote of the Church. The same remarks apply very much to the organist. This official is usually paid a salary. As the amount of this is nearly always, at least comparatively, small, it is frequently supplemented by the privilege of using the organ free of charge for the instruction of pupils. Where this permission is granted it is desirable that the arrangement should be in writing.

The choir will, of course, need some preparation for its work. There should be a regular weekly practice, at which the Hymns, Anthems, &c., for the following Sunday, will be carefully gone over, as far as needful. It is wise, however, to give the choir the opportunity of learning more difficult and elaborate music. If the choir is a good one, it will take delight in the music of the great masters, and the practice of their splendid harmonies will

make it more efficient, as a help in the psalmody of the Church.

There is a danger to be avoided. Choirs and organs do not exist for their own sake. They are a means to an end ; and that end is gained only when the psalmody of the Church is musical and devout, and at the same time hearty and congregational. Hence the tunes, to which the hymns are sung, should not be above the capacity of the Congregation. This applies in less degree, perhaps, to anthems. Generally speaking, even these should be sufficiently easy for the Congregation to sing. But, at times, the choir may appropriately introduce an anthem, the music of which is impressive and beautiful, but too difficult for the worshippers generally to sing. If this freedom is sparingly used, and in the other parts of the service the choir shows itself to be in complete sympathy with the Church, such music may become a beautiful and inspiring part of the worship.

#### (5) THE CARETAKER.

Among the perplexities of those who have to administer the affairs of a Church, not the least is that in connection with the caretaker,

whose services are not unimportant. He can do much to hinder or to help. It is, therefore, needful to obtain the services of a suitable man. What kind of a man he should be, one can easily say. He should be a man of upright character, a Christian man if possible. He should also be cheerful and obliging, and possess some practical knowledge and skill. The two most essential qualities are common sense, and a readiness to take trouble.

Perhaps a frequent mistake, which Churches make, is that of getting cheap labour. Pay low wages, and you get inefficient service. Offer better payment, and better men will apply for your work. A few pounds saved in the wages of the caretaker, will probably be lost three times over in waste and inefficiency.

It is well, when making the appointment, to have a complete statement in writing of all the duties and emoluments. Of this there should be two copies ; one signed by the caretaker, and kept by the deacons, or the Finance committee (if there be one), and the other given to him for his guidance.

The duties of the caretaker are easily defined. They will, no doubt, vary slightly in different cases, but generally speaking, they



will include all that is needful for keeping the buildings in a perfectly clean condition ; the opening of doors, at a convenient time, before the commencement of any services or meeting ; the lighting of gas, or other illuminant ; the kindling of fires, and the management of the heating apparatus. They will also include the extinguishing of lights and fires, and the safe locking up of the buildings after meetings. For attendance at tea meetings, and special occasions which involve much extra work, an additional payment is sometimes made.

It is usual to subject the buildings, at certain seasons of the year, to a more complete and thorough cleansing than is possible week by week. On these occasions the windows are cleaned, the walls carefully swept, and dust cleaned away from ledges, mouldings, &c. If the buildings are large, the Caretaker should at these times be authorised to get further help, and a sufficient amount should be allowed so as to cover the cost.

It is a wise plan to appoint a deacon, or member of Finance Committee where such exists, or some other person with the needful knowledge and skill, who will take a real interest in the work, to direct the care-

taker, and be responsible for his efficient discharge of duty. He should also give instructions for the purchase of those things—such as brushes, utensils, soap, coals, oil, &c., &c., which may be needed in connection with the caretaker's work.



## CHAPTER III.

### The Public Assemblies of the Church.

#### 1. PUBLIC WORSHIP.—Sunday.

The coming together of the Church, for the worship of God and the edification of the people on the Lord's Day, is in some respects its most important gathering. It is so, partly because being public it is an efficient means of impressing the outside world; it is so still more, because it is then that the Church not only realizes its own corporate life, but engages in that which is at once its highest and most characteristic activity. The prosperity of the Church depends almost wholly upon the manner in which this part of its service is discharged. If this is done well, all else may be well; if this is done ill, all else is likely to fail. Every part of the service should lift the soul nearer to God, should make spiritual realities appear in sight, should stir the conscience, and lead to self-consecration.

In accomplishing the full purpose of public worship, not a few persons will find appropriate activity. Let us briefly refer to some of the most important of them—

**(a.) THE CARETAKER AT HIS WORK.**

It may be supposed that the buildings have been duly cleaned and dusted on the previous day. Still, however carefully this may have been done, there will be some dust apparent, and it will be well for the caretaker to go round again, duster in hand, on Sunday morning. It is most important that the House of God should be clean. When the people begin to enter, not a speck of dust should be seen.

The matter of ventilation requires thought and care. There must be an intelligent study of the buildings, so as to know in any given circumstances what the result will be of the opening or closing of any ventilator, door, or window. To secure a good result, especially when a large Congregation is assembled, is a triumph of intelligence and care, of which a man may well be proud.

The caretaker should have all things ready, lights burning (if it be in the evening),

doors open, and every thing in its place half an hour, or at least twenty minutes, before the time for beginning service. It is not well that persons who come early should be kept waiting outside.

(b.) THE ORGANIST AND THE CHOIR.

The organist will, of course, be at his post in good time. It is usual for a voluntary to be played prior to the beginning of the service. The organist should fix the time for commencing this, so as to finish the voluntary punctually at the time appointed for the service to begin. He should exercise great care in the choice of music, which should always be selected from what is usually denominated "sacred." He must always keep in view the true purpose of the voluntary, as a preparation for worship. Few things are more helpful than music in calming the mind, and detaching it from sordid and worldly thoughts. A few beautiful strains of Handel, or Mendelssohn, will aid a man greatly in putting mind and heart into an attitude of prayer, even when most disturbed by sorrow or by care. A true musician will not be satisfied if his music only draws attention to itself. He

will not feel that his object is achieved, unless he has subdued the whole Congregation to quietness, and made it easier for them to draw near to the Mercy Seat. There should be the same care, also, in regard to the closing voluntary. In this there is some difficulty. At the beginning of the service, the organist can make his own choice, and keep to it, but he may sometimes find that the voluntary he has selected for the close, is not appropriate. The sermon has been, perhaps, a very solemn appeal to men's consciences, and his voluntary is too lively, or the sermon has been of a specially bright and joyous character, and the music he has chosen is inappropriately solemn. It will be wise for him to be prepared with two or three alternative pieces, and if he himself enters into the full spirit of the service, he will be glad to have music ready, that will give expression to the feelings of his own heart.

The choirmaster and the choir should assemble early. If a room is, as it should be, set apart for their use, they should meet there first of all, and make all needful arrangements, before taking their place in the Church. There should be a perfect understanding between the

choirmaster, the organist and the choir, and no need for any whispered communications during the progress of the service. Each member should have a printed form of the order of service, on which the numbers of hymns and tunes and all other needful information, should be given. The choirmaster, or the secretary, should see that these papers are properly distributed, and that all books and music are in their places. The choir should be very careful to take their seats in a devout and reverent spirit. Anything like irreverence on their part spoils the whole service.

(c.) THE GATHERING OF THE CONGREGATION.

In some Churches—happily only a very few—no arrangements are made for shewing people into seats; consequently strangers, when they come, are repelled, and carry away with them an unpleasant feeling of coldness and neglect. It is obvious enough that this is not as it should be. There should always be some persons, whose special duty it is to see that all who come have seats, and are supplied with needful books, &c. Special attention should be given to strangers, as well as to the aged, and the poor. It is most important

that this work should be *well* done. The position of "a doorkeeper in the House of God" is an honourable, as well as a most important one. The work should never be left to the caretaker. Those who have charge of this duty should be courteous and tactful, men of intelligence, and with the heartiest sympathy with the work of the Church. If they are also men of good social standing, it will be the better.

Every member of the Congregation should make it a rule, as far as possible, to be in his place a few minutes before the beginning of the service. In a few cases this may not be possible, other duties intervening; but for most people the rule of punctuality is imperative. The whole Congregation should have assembled at the time the minister enters the pulpit. It is a good plan, in cases where it can be conveniently carried out, not to allow any one to enter while any part of the service is proceeding—a short interval being made to afford opportunity for entrance after that part of the service is ended. In no case should any one enter during prayer. The officials of the Church also will do well to avoid any obtrusive activity during the service, any needless moving



about from place to place. Whatever they are obliged to do should be done in so quiet a way as not to attract notice.

It need hardly be said, that there should be a good supply of Hymn Books kept for the use of visitors. There is, however, much to be said in favour of the plan of supplying books for the whole congregation.

**(d.) THE MINISTER IN THE VESTRY.**

Provision is wisely made, in most Churches, of a room for the use of the minister. This should be kept for his use exclusively ; another room being provided, in which the deacons may meet to confer on necessary matters of business. To most preachers, a little time before entering the pulpit spent in quiet thought and prayer, is a very helpful preparation. The deacons therefore will do their minister, as well as themselves, a good service, if they will guard those few minutes from anything that will disturb or disquiet. They should themselves avoid all animated discussion. If painful news has to be communicated, let it be kept till the service is over. Let the minister at such a time have all the sympathy and respect which it is possible to

give. It is a good and helpful custom also for minister and deacons to meet together just before the service for prayer.

(c.) THE MINISTER IN THE PULPIT.

The Church secretary, or other official whose duty it may be, should be careful to supply the minister with all necessary notices, and the choirmaster should see that he has a list of the hymns, &c. The secretary should, likewise, note whether all things needful for the minister's use in the pulpit—such as Bible, hymn book, glass of water, &c., are in their places. There is one useful adjunct to the minister's comfort, which one seldom sees, but which might be fitted with advantage to every pulpit. An electric communication between the pulpit and the pew in which the Church secretary or the caretaker is seated might be easily fixed, and would often be of use. If the minister requires any little service while in the pulpit, it is not as a rule easy to obtain it. An electric indicator of some kind would obviate this difficulty.

The worship in a Congregational Church, as usually conducted, is almost entirely in the hands of the minister. The prayers, the readings

the sermon, are all his, and the only share the people have in the worship, is the silent following of the minister and singing the hymns. The question is often debated, whether it would not be well to give the people a larger share in the worship, and that question mostly takes the form of an enquiry as to the desirableness of adopting some form of liturgy. The advantages of free prayer are obvious, and it would be a grave mistake to put it aside in favour of even the most effective liturgical forms. One is easily able to call to mind many services when the prayer, though non-liturgical, seemed to lift the soul into the immediate presence of God, while on other occasions, when a noble liturgy was in use, it failed to inspire any devout feeling or heavenward aspiration. In either case much depends on the minister. If he is filled with the spirit of prayer, and possesses the subtle power of leading others to the throne of grace, perhaps the Congregation will not ask for a liturgy, but if it is otherwise then not even a liturgy will help him.

The question of liturgical forms is too large to be discussed here. We need only say, that there is nothing in Congregational principles inconsistent with the use of a liturgy. It is a question

for the individual Church. If a Congregation desire it, and judge it to be of service to them, there is no reason why they should not adopt a liturgical form of worship, whether that form be an adaptation of the prayers of the Church of England, or some one of the forms of worship more recently prepared.

The order of service only slightly varies in Congregational Churches, and is usually of a very simple kind. In most Churches a fixed order is followed. There is, of course, a great advantage in this. The service is likely to move with greater smoothness, when the order followed is familiar to both minister and people. Hesitation as to what comes next, whether in pulpit or pew, will sometimes cause confusion, and be fatal to devotion.

## 2. PUBLIC WORSHIP.—Week Nights.

### a. THE PRAYER MEETING.

It is much to be regretted, that in so many Churches, the weekly Prayer Meeting is a thing of the past. As prayer is the life of the Church it is desirable that wherever possible such a meeting should be held. If the Church is alive with true spiritual power, the prayer meeting is likely to be well attended, and conducted with spirit and energy.

The great difficulty in conducting a prayer meeting, is to secure brevity and variety. Too often prayers are long and wearisome; they should be brief, and to the point; and there should be enough men in the Church, able and willing to help so as to secure variety. Dulness should be banished from every service, but especially from the prayer meeting. Life is everything.

It would add much to the interest of the meeting, if those who attended came with some definite purpose in their minds. A syllabus might be drawn up, for a month, giving a special subject for each meeting. If it is a missionary prayer meeting, let some field of labour, as China, or some particular mission, as Amoy, be selected. A short address of ten minutes' duration upon the subject of the evening, would be helpful.

The chief difficulty in carrying out any suggestions for the improvement of the prayer meeting, is to find men who can pray. In almost all Churches these are comparatively few. The mistake is made of supposing that prayer is a gift which must come unsought. It is not recognized that, like all other powers, discipline and training are not only possible, but quite

legitimate. Some ministers, keeping this in view, have gathered round them a band of young men, whom they have trained in the sacred exercise of prayer. They have held small private meetings, to which Christian young men were invited, expressly for the purpose of such training. In these small gatherings, assured of the sympathy of all present, it has not been so difficult to make a beginning ; the young men too have soon gained confidence, and frequent practice in this holy exercise has brought precision and ease. It has been easy also for the minister to point out mistakes, and suggest better methods. The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour, Christian Bands and Guilds, if wisely and effectively conducted, will lead to much the same result. Teachers of senior classes in the Sunday School might also give very effectual help.

#### **b. THE SERVICE.**

Most Churches, if not all, hold a regular service in the middle of the week. Generally speaking, this is similar in character to the services of the Sunday. Some ministers, indeed, make no difference, and conduct the

mid-week service in exactly the same way as that of the Sunday morning. The conditions, however, are not quite the same, and some difference of form seems to be needful. It may be generally assumed that those who attend are Christians, or at least the more earnest and devout members of the Congregation. Hence the address may always have Christians in view, and may therefore take a deeper tone of spiritual feeling, and may even make demands upon the attention, inadmissible perhaps at other times.

The week-night service might with advantage be used for giving a series of expository discourses on some of the less-known books of Scripture, and also for the exposition of some of the essential principles of Church life and order. It is wise, in public worship, to avoid controversy as far as possible; but positive teaching may rightly be given on those principles which are distinctive of Congregationalists, as well as other matters in regard to which the Church of Christ as a whole is divided. Some ministers give, at this service, an exposition of the International Lesson for the following Sunday. This may be very helpful to the teachers in the Sunday School, especially if no Preparation Class is held.

### 3. SPECIAL SERVICES.

#### (a.) THE BAPTISMAL SERVICE.

The rite of Baptism should be administered in such a manner as will impress the minds of all who participate in it with the reality and worth of the service. In this, as in all other religious observances, there should be order and reverence. Slovenly methods, whether in the conduct of the service itself, or in the arrangements connected with it, should always be avoided. Careful arrangement is especially necessary in this service, the details of which should never be left to the hazard of the moment.

Since one essential idea connected with Baptism is that of dedication, it seems most appropriate that the service should be public. It ought not, except under special circumstances, to be held in a private house. Whenever possible, it should take place in connection with the public worship of the Church, and the best time would seem to be at the close of the Sunday Morning Service. In most cases it is well to have stated times for the observance—once in each month or each quarter—as is found most suited to local circumstances. An announcement should be made from the pulpit



on the previous Sunday, stating that the rite of Baptism will be administered, and asking parents who wish to bring their children, to give notice of their intention to the minister or to one of the deacons.

It is important that both parents should attend. Very often, and especially amongst the working classes, the father is absent on these occasions. In some cases perhaps this is unavoidable, but whenever possible, the mother and the father should both be present. The parents should assemble, with their children, in the vestry, or in such other room as may be appropriated for their use. Here they should make what preparation may be needful, and remain until the time appointed for the Baptism. The children should not be present during the preceding service.

One of the deacons should in all cases be in attendance to superintend the arrangements. Before the beginning of the service, he should take down in writing the names of the parents and their children, in such a form that it may be of use to the minister in the conduct of the service itself. It would be well also for a lady to be present in the vestry, whose help might secure the comfort of mother and child.

While the hymn is being sung at the close of the sermon, the minister should leave the pulpit and take his place in readiness for the Baptism. At the same time, the parents with their children should enter and take their places as nearly as possible facing the minister. They should of course be seated. On the table should be placed a suitable Font. This should be of stone or of some other appropriate material. If an ordinary vessel is used as a makeshift, it at once robs the service of impressiveness.

The service itself should be simple in form and not too long. It may consist of a brief address to the parents, followed by the reading of scripture and prayer. Some ministers prefer a brief liturgical form, which each can prepare for himself. After this the deacon should bring forward the parents of each child mentioning the name. The father, taking the child from the mother, should present it to the minister, who taking it in his hands should baptize it, saying :—"N. I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

If at this point, the children should be restless and fretful, it may be advisable for the

mothers to retire with them into the vestry ; otherwise they should remain to the close of the service.

It is the custom in most Churches to keep a Register of Baptisms. This has not the same importance now as before the introduction of National Registration, but it is still for many reasons desirable. The Register should have spaces for the names of the parents, and of the child ; for the date of birth, and of the baptism ; and for the signature of the minister.

There is one point which deserves a passing notice. In many Churches some of those present are opposed to Infant Baptism. It is a frequent custom, with all such persons, to retire from the service whenever Baptisms take place. Whether this is right or wise on their part, must of course be left to their individual judgment. It might perhaps be better for them to recognise the custom as part of the ordinary procedure of the Church to which for the time being they are attached, and which they are under no necessity either to approve or to condemn. If, however, the Baptist brother feels that he *must* make a protest, let him do it in as quiet and unobtrusive a way as possible.

(b.) THE ORDINATION AND RECOGNITION SERVICES.

One of the most interesting services in any Church is the Ordination of a young minister, whether to be a pastor at home, or to work as a missionary abroad. Such an occasion cannot fail to awaken a very deep interest. It is like a knight of the olden time, putting on the armour for his first campaign. No heroic deeds have yet added lustre to his name ; but the possibility of great achievement is there, and the hope of it is in every heart.

The meaning of Ordination is simple and clear. It is the recognition of the call of Christ and His Church. Ordination does not make a minister ; it only acknowledges the minister who is already made by the special anointing of the Holy Ghost.

It is usual to invite all the ministers of the district in which the Church stands, as well as others from a distance, to be present. Sometimes a greater number attend than can take active part in the service, but as far as possible all should have something to do. There are always some ministers whose presence is specially important ; such as representatives of the County Association ; of the College at

which the minister to be ordained was trained ; and, in the case of a missionary, of the Society in connection with which his future work will be carried on.

The order usually followed is simple and appropriate, but the whole of it is too long to be included in a single service. The main service is usually held on a convenient evening of the week. Some singing should be introduced, but the nature of the service does not admit of any musical display.

The following is the order usually followed :—

1. The reading of an appropriate passage of Scripture ; and a brief prayer. The minister who takes this part should avoid anticipating too much the Ordination Prayer which has to follow.

2. An address on Church principles, such as the Constitution of a Christian Church, or the validity of the Congregational Ministry ; or, if it be the Ordination of a missionary, a description of the field of labour in which the young minister is expecting to work.

3. A statement by one of the deacons, of the steps which have led to the choice by the Church of a Pastor.

4. The Questions to the young minister. These are usually arranged in conference with the minister who takes this part of the service. The answers are generally carefully prepared and read from a manuscript. There is an intensely personal interest in this part of the service, as it very naturally leads to a somewhat full statement of the inner experience of the young minister, of the influences which have shaped his character, and of the steps which have led him to his present position.

The questions themselves are usually to the following effect:—

- a. What reasons have you for believing that you are a child of God?
- b. What are your reasons for believing that you are divinely called to the work of the Christian ministry?
- c. Why do you prefer to exercise your ministry in a Congregational Church?
- d. Will you give us a brief outline of the principal doctrines which you intend to teach?
- e. What is your conception of the Christian ministry, and what methods do you propose to yourself in fulfilling its duties?

5. The Ordination Prayer follows appropriately immediately after the Questions. It seems suitable that this part of the service should be taken by one of the senior ministers present. Sometimes it is taken by the former pastor of the young minister. In the course of this prayer, the custom used to be observed of "the imposition of hands." This custom, however, is seldom observed now owing to a very natural reluctance to associate with the Ordination Service anything even remotely suggestive of sacerdotalism. It is a pity, however, that the old symbol should be discarded; seeing that it has New Testament precedent and is in itself appropriate as suggestive of that gift of the Holy Ghost, which has already made the man a minister of Christ.

6. The Charge to the newly ordained minister is now delivered. This is nearly always given by a minister whose position, as well as his personal character, add weight to his words. In many cases the Principal of the College at which the young minister was a student, is asked to take this part of the service.

7. An address to the Church on its duties

and responsibilities in relation to its minister, would here naturally follow. This, however, is mostly deferred until the following Sunday, though in some cases when the Ordination has taken place in the afternoon it is given in the evening of the same day.

At most Ordinations a form of certificate is ready for signature by the ministers present. This is often more or less elaborately written and illuminated, so as to make it a worthy memorial of the service. It is usual for the minister who offers the Ordination Prayer to sign first, and then the minister who delivers the charge. The others sign in whatever order may be convenient.

The Certificate is usually to the following effect :—

“This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_,  
 lately a student in \_\_\_\_\_ College, has  
 been this day solemnly ordained by prayer  
 [and the imposition of hands] to the office of  
 the Christian Ministry, as the same is  
 exercised among Protestant Dissenters of  
 the Independent, or Congregational De-  
 nomination; and that he has at the same  
 time been publicly recognised as Pastor of  
 the Christian Church assembling in \_\_\_\_\_ .



“In token whereof we the undersigned,  
being present, and assisting at such Ordination  
Service, have hereto set our hands, this  
day of                      18 .”

The Recognition Service should not differ very much from an Ordination. A very serious mistake is sometimes made by ministers and Churches. Instead of this being a solemn and impressive service, it is made a kind of free and easy meeting at which speeches are sometimes made wholly wanting in weight and seriousness. The only ways in which a Recognition should differ from an Ordination, are those suggested by the fact that the minister recognised has had experience in the ministry already, and may be regarded as a veteran rather than as a recruit. This will of necessity give a different tone to the service, and will require the adoption of something like, and yet unlike, the questions asked in Ordination.

Sometimes the service is directed by a President. This position should always be filled by a minister, who should be chosen for the same reasons as would guide the choice of one to deliver the “charge” at an Ordination. It is better, however, to dispense with any formal presidency and follow the order, as far

as may be, already given for the Ordination Service.

The order then will be much as follows :—

- (1.) Reading of Scripture and brief Prayer.
- (2.) Address on Church principles. †
- (3.) A statement by a deacon of the steps which led to the Church's choice of a pastor.
- (4.) A statement by the minister to be recognised, of the reasons for his acceptance of the call of the Church, and of the spirit and purpose which he wishes to embody in his ministry.
- (5.) A prayer for the minister, sometimes spoken of as the "Recognition Prayer."
- (6.) An address on the Christian ministry, its difficulties, its responsibilities, and the secret of success.
- (7.) An address to the Church on its duties and obligations towards its minister.



## CHAPTER IV.

### **The Private Assemblies of the Church.**

#### **1. THE CHURCH MEETING.**

The Church Meeting is the gathering of the Church proper for the transaction of its own business. Hence every member is under a solemn obligation, as far as possible, to be present at every meeting. None but a very sufficient reason should be admitted as justifying absence. Each one is bound to take an intelligent part in the life and work of the Church, and this obligation cannot well be discharged apart from regular attendance at the Church Meeting. This gathering, however, should be something more than a mere business meeting ; for not only does the Church then attend to those matters which concern its prosperity, but it realises its true function as the organ of Jesus Christ. The meeting of men and women, as a Church, is a solemn occasion. Whether those present are

many or few, Christ is in their midst ; and if for a moment they forget His presence, they are disloyal both to Him and to themselves.

At all Church Meetings the pastor, if present, should preside. The first fifteen minutes, at least, should be given to praise and prayer, after which the business may proceed. This should be regulated according to an agenda, drawn up at the previous deacons' meeting. It will be well to keep to this agenda. Experience has shewn that order is needful, and if all things in a Church Meeting are to be done with wisdom and discretion, some rules must be followed. If there is a discussion, those rules should be observed which govern debate in all well-conducted meetings. Some Churches allow no resolution to be proposed, unless it has received the previous consideration and sanction of the deacons. This rule, however, seems too stringent, but it is a wise precaution to require notice to be given of all resolutions, if the matter to which they refer does not appear on the agenda.

The first business that should be taken, after the reading of the Minutes of the previous meeting, and dealing with questions that arise therefrom, should always be the

admission of new members, and the granting of letters of transfer to those who have moved to other Churches. This should never be a merely formal proceeding. It ought to be one of the most solemn, as well as one of the most deeply interesting matters with which the Church has to deal. The testimonies given on behalf of new converts, should be such as to strengthen the faith and stir the zeal of all present. To see young people putting on the Christian armour, ought to be, to all veterans in the faith, an occasion of deep and holy joy. To grant letters of transfer to those who have left, is no doubt often a very sorrowful task. It would, however, add to the interest of the proceeding, and take from it some of its painfulness, if information were given, when possible, of the Church to which the member in question has removed, and the work which he may already have taken in hand.

At this stage it might also be well to refer to those members who may have died since the previous meeting ; to those in the Church who have been sick, or in trouble, and on whose behalf the sympathy and prayers of all the brethren might well be asked ; and to related subjects that may be of special interest.

One important item of business is the revision of the Church Roll. This should be carefully done by the minister and deacons at the close of each year, and a report be made of the result at the next Church meeting. The report, so given, should include the number of those in fellowship at the time, as well as the names which it is proposed to remove from the list. These latter should be embodied in a resolution which should be submitted to the Church. Such a revision of the Church Roll should also be made whenever a new minister enters upon the pastorate. It should be understood that no names ought to be removed from the Church Roll without a special resolution.

A Church Meeting is all the better for being conducted in a business-like way ; but though the proceedings may in some degree be formal, they should never be cold or lifeless. Let them always be animated by an earnest and devout spirit, and by the constant recognition of the Master's presence.

While the business of the Church will, of necessity, be the chief concern at most of these meetings, it need not be the only one. Sometimes, of course, the business will take the whole time of the meeting ; but this

will not be always, and the opportunity should be taken for prayer, for a word of practical exhortation, or for conference on some subject closely touching the life and work of the Church. It might be well, at times, to give the meeting up entirely to Christian fellowship, putting all formal business aside for the time being. Such a meeting might be held at least once a year, at which there might be a review of the past year's work, and some indication of new enterprises to be undertaken. At this meeting also, the members might, according to some solemn and impressive form, renew their covenant of allegiance to Christ and to each other.

## 2. THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING.

It will be found advisable, at least annually, and at such other times as special need arises, to hold a meeting of the whole Congregation. In general character it will not greatly differ from the Church Meeting, as already described, except that some features of a social kind may well be introduced to vary the proceedings and add to their attraction. The business to be done at this meeting should be to receive reports on the work of the past

year, to elect the Finance Committee, where there is one, to receive the annual statement of Accounts, to consider any important financial question, or to discuss any new movement that may be contemplated. Sometimes also such a meeting will be called to consider the question of a new minister, when the pastorate is vacant. Every effort should be made to make such meetings pleasant and attractive. Although called chiefly for business and conducted in a business-like way, they should be social and free from mere formality. Care should be taken, of course, to preserve the strictly Christian character of all these gatherings. Let there be enough and to spare of what is genial and kindly; but all that is out of harmony with Christian faith and life may well be kept outside.

### 3. THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The most solemn of all the services of the Church is the Lord's Supper. The Church realises then, in a very special degree, the presence of its Lord, and yields itself to the contemplation of that fact, which is at once the most central and the most solemn of the Christian verities, the death of Christ for His



people. At a service like this, which, if it has reality at all, awakens such deep and holy feeling, it is important to give careful attention to every detail. At the Lord's Table nothing is trivial. A small mishap, the forgetfulness of the right words at the right moment, jars upon the feelings, and has all the unpleasantness of a harsh discord in music.

It should be the aim of all who assist in this service to preserve its quietness and solemnity. As in most Congregational Churches the Communicants remain in their seats, this should offer no difficulty. In this matter indeed all depends upon the minister and deacons.

At the time for beginning the service, all should be in their places. It does not look well if the deacons take their places, one after the other at short intervals, when the service has begun. When the minister gives the plate or the cup to the deacons, each should wait until the rest are ready. They should then, without noise or haste, take up their positions for the distribution. If the Church be at all large, each deacon should have his assigned place, and should generally keep to it. When the distribution is complete they should all return together, those who have finished first waiting

for the rest. Having returned to the table, the deacons should take their seats, and the minister should hand to them the bread or the wine, as the case may be ; he himself participating at the same time. Everything should be done quietly, reverently, and without any haste.

As a rule no strict form is observed, the minister acting very much as his heart prompts him. Two tendencies are seen in the minds of different persons ; one towards a fixed form, the other towards freedom and spontaneity. Which of these tendencies should most prevail, is a question for the individual Church to determine.

The pastor, of course, presides. It is fitting that he should ; but the old sentiment which forbade any but an ordained minister to preside at the Lord's Table, is happily fast passing away. If it is found wise and needful—as it often is in Mission Stations, and village Churches—for an unordained man to preside at the Communion, his doing so violates no New Testament principle or precept. Nevertheless it is not every man, even though he be a member or a deacon of the Church, who should be permitted to assume this solemn function. It should be restricted to men of high personal

character and undoubted integrity, as well as of earnest spiritual life.

It is not now customary to refuse the privilege of coming to the Lord's Supper, to those not actual members of the Church. It is often found that the first thing a new convert longs to do, in order to confess Christ, is to sit with His people at the Table of the Lord. And we have no right to bar the way. Moreover, there are some, whose doctrinal beliefs are different from ours, and who therefore would not join our Church, and yet who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity ; and shall we tell them, they may not join with us in celebrating the Lord's death ? Nay, we dare not. Therefore our invitation should in effect be : Let all those who love the Lord Jesus join with us in this Holy Communion.

What shall be the wine used at the Lord's Table ? That, strange to say, is a question which has broken up Churches, sundered friends, and filled the hearts of many earnest pastors with anxiety and trouble. That Christ used fermented wine hardly seems to admit of doubt. Are we therefore bound to do the same ? Scarcely, if for any reason a change has become expedient. In view of the drinking

customs of the day and of the moral danger in which so many stand, unfermented wine is surely to be preferred. It is not a question for bigots on either side to wrangle over, but it is for Christian brethren to consider one another, and for the strong to help the weak.



## CHAPTER V.

### The Work of the Church.

Of the various activities of the Church we can speak but briefly. That these activities should be abundant, according to the full measure of power and opportunity, hardly needs to be said. The Church must work, that it may grow ; for without growth, there will not be healthy life ; and without life, there will not be continuance. The Church does not answer the true end of its being, if it does nothing to remove the ignorance and moral darkness of the world. It must gather into itself, as to a home, the souls it has won for Christ. It must stand in the midst of the sorrow and the sin of the world ; a refuge, in which the sad and the sinful, the weary and the wretched, may find rest and peace and eternal salvation. Hence, no Church can be pleasing to Christ, which is not full of ardent and beneficent activity.

## 1. THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

It is fully recognized now by most persons, that one important element in the responsibility of the Church is the care of the young. There is also a growing feeling that this work needs to be better done. It is not so much that the work of the past has been defective, as that the conditions of the work have changed; and consequently methods and appliances must needs change likewise.

The officers of a well-appointed School will usually comprise President, Superintendent, Secretary, and Librarian. Frequently the last two offices are held by the same person. The President should always be the minister, who should preside at all Teachers' meetings, and should be consulted on all matters which concern the interests of the School.

In every School much will depend upon the superintendent. He should be a man of tact and warm sympathy; a great lover of children, and with considerable organizing skill. There is no position in the Church, apart from that of the pastor, of greater influence and importance; and the Church should even go out of its way to show its appreciation of, and its cordial sympathy with

his work. The superintendent, as well as the other officers of the school, should be elected by the teachers ; but in the case of the former it would be well that the election should be duly reported to the Church. The great difficulty, at the present time, is to obtain really efficient teachers. We seem to need that every teacher should have the skill of an expert, and the ardour of an enthusiast. The Church must give its best. Here is work for intellectual and cultivated men, as well as for men of spiritual fire and holy zeal. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth more labourers into His harvest."

A most important adjunct to the Sunday School is the Teachers' Preparation Class. This should be conducted by the minister, or the superintendent, or some other competent person. The efficiency of this class is a matter of great importance. It should be interesting as well as instructive. It should stimulate the teachers to independent study, elevate their conceptions of, and deepen their enthusiasm for, their work. It should not only aim at affording guidance in lesson-preparation ; but give instruction in the art of teaching, as well as in such needful subjects as the history and criticism

of the Bible, the elements of Christian doctrine, and some of the matters dealt with under the head of Biblical Archæology. Every inducement should be held out, to the younger teachers especially, to prepare for and to pass such examinations as those of the Sunday School Union. It should be recognized that those who gain distinction in these examinations win honour for the School as well as for themselves.

It should be a matter of conscience for every teacher, if possible, to attend the Preparation Class. Even those should be present who may not feel any special need of its help, if only as an encouragement to the rest. Some whose opportunities of gaining knowledge have been few, might fear to attend lest they should expose their ignorance. Let them remember that ignorance ceases to be a discredit in proportion to the earnestness with which we strive after knowledge.

It ought to be a definite and well understood rule, that no person be appointed as a teacher who has not shewn aptness to teach, as well as possession of the necessary knowledge. This, which would seem to be a maxim of common sense, has not been the rule in all cases. The difficulty of finding teachers has



often been so great that no opportunity has been given for selection, and whoever was willing was thrust into the work. To alter this policy will no doubt lessen the number of teachers; but if it lead to greater fitness in the workers, and better quality in the work done, the loss will be more than compensated.

It has sometimes happened that great harm has been done to Church and School alike, by those most deeply concerned allowing the School to become an institution by itself, distinct from, and independent of, the Church. Whenever this is done a grave wrong is committed. The two are not only intimately connected, the School indeed is an essential part of the Church; it is the Church caring for the young. Not only, therefore, should they work in harmony, but the School should fully recognize itself as the department of the Church which specially cares for the young. There should thus be the heartiest loyalty on the part of the officers and the teachers of the school towards the Church; and the warmest sympathy on the part of minister, deacons, and Church members, with the work and the workers in the School. There is no question that the most important work of the Church is that

among the children. That priest was wise and far-sighted who said, "Give me the children, and I care not who has the adults." Let us win the children for Christ, and keep them. They will help us to win their parents, and they themselves, by and by, will be the men and women who will fill our pews, and recruit the ranks of Christian workers.

## 2. LINKS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND CHURCH.

That something is needed to maintain the interest of young people who leave the Sunday School, and foster their attachment to the Church, is fully recognized. What that something is, it is not easy to say. The one thing needful has probably not been found as yet. Perhaps the most effective way of dealing with the matter will be for the Church to have several vigorous forms of work, in which young people are likely to take an interest. Let there be Literary Societies, Bible Classes, Enquirers' Classes, a Christian Band, Boys' Brigade, and anything of a helpful kind that will attract young people, and keep them in touch with the Church, and the Church in touch with them.

Two special efforts in this direction

deserve mention. The first is what has been called, "The Christian Institute." It is really a Sunday School with another name, its own separate buildings, its own officers and teachers, and intended only for the elder scholars. The building is so designed that each class has its own room, in the furnishing of which it is encouraged to take special pride; and in which it may meet at any time for any good purpose. Such an institution, presided over by a superintendent of the right stamp, and with teachers of strong mental grip, deep spirituality, much openmindedness, and warm sympathy with young people, will be likely to produce the very best results.

Another device, full of promise for filling the gap between the School and the Church, is the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour. It is a valuable feature of this Society that it is not only Christian, but attaches itself to the Church. The aim is threefold; it seeks to bring young people together for prayer and Christian work, as well as in some degree for personal intercourse and for social enjoyment. Much help may also be found in Young People's Guilds and Christian Bands, and other institutions with a similar aim.

### 3. AGGRESSIVE WORK.

In addition to the work which the Church may be doing for the children and young people, some vigorous efforts will be needed to get at the people who are living without religion, and who will not come unless they are sought. What shape the work should take in this direction, will depend much upon local circumstances. Adaptation is all important. What is suitable in the case of a suburban Church, surrounded by villas, the dwellings of the well-to-do, may not be suited to a Church in the midst of crowded streets, inhabited only by the poor. Let the minister and his helpers be wise, clear-headed, free from the trammels of precedent, careless of captious criticism, and intent only on adopting the methods which will secure the best and most lasting results.

Every Church should have a well organized system of district visitation. This is most important, especially if the neighbourhood be a poor one. A good staff of workers in this department is perhaps not easily obtained. A few earnest helpers can, however, do much ; and if the whole district is well mapped out, and a visitor appointed to each section, it will bring

the Church into close contact with the entire neighbourhood.

In many cases it will be found that some such movement as the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon, will prove both attractive and helpful. This will depend very much upon the vigour thrown into the work. It will need a good staff of speakers, and if men of education and of social position as well as of ability lend their aid, it will add much to the usefulness and success of the movement. Whether this should be for men only, or for both sexes, or whether there should be separate meetings, one for men and the other for women, can best be determined by local circumstances.

It is sometimes found advisable to establish a work in a neighbourhood, quite distinct from that in which the Church itself stands. Very often this is done by erecting a Mission Hall, and keeping the work strictly under the control of the minister and deacons of the parent Church. There are, no doubt, some advantages in this plan ; and, in particular cases, it might be the best. Still it may be questioned whether it is sound policy. If the neighbourhood be spiritually destitute, it would seem to be far better to establish a Branch

Church with its own membership and officers. The parent Church might well keep its offspring under careful pupilage until it is strong enough to walk alone. If it is thought best, however, to have a Mission Hall, and not a Church, great care should be taken in the choice of a superintendent. He should be a man who will act in thorough loyalty to the parent Church. The position is one of difficulty and delicacy, and few men perhaps can wisely use the power, which the position gives them, and yet, at the same time, act in complete harmony with the Church whose representatives they are.



## CHAPTER VI.

### **The Finances of the Church.**

There ought to be no need to insist upon the important duty of keeping the accounts of the Church, and managing all its financial business with great care and accuracy. Strange to say, in many Churches there is no need more urgent. Not a few treasurers, whether deacons or members of Committee, who in their own business keep accounts in a very systematic and exact form, yet manage the affairs of the Church in so slovenly and unbusinesslike a way that accuracy is more than doubtful and an audit is impossible. The evils arising from careless methods of finance in Church work are obvious. They make a wise control of expenditure almost impossible ; and they destroy confidence, by suggesting questions to which no satisfactory answer can be given. It ought to be fully and unanimously recognised, that

the finances of a Church should be dealt with in as careful and exact a way, as those of any business establishment.

The money collected should be brought into the vestry immediately after the service, and then counted by the treasurer, and one other person ; or if the treasurer is not present, the secretary should take his place. The sum collected should then be entered in a book kept for that purpose only ; and it should be certified by the person assisting at the counting. If the treasurer is not in the habit of being present, he should when the money is paid to him, affix his signature to the item in the book, as a formal receipt. All cash received by the treasurer in the shape of subscriptions and donations, should be immediately acknowledged by him, and an official printed receipt sent to the donor. The official Receipt Book, together with the Vestry Cash Book, will thus afford authentic vouchers for money received.

Immediately on receipt or payment of any money, the treasurer should enter the particulars in the Cash book, in which he should keep a Dr. and Cr. account. If the same Treasurer has charge of several funds he will find it convenient to have a book specially ruled and printed, with



a cash column for each fund, and another column in which all items are entered. These should be carried forward from page to page, so as to give the proper totals at the end of the year.

All accounts should be so kept, that a true and complete audit may be possible and even easy. There should be a voucher for every item, both of income and expenditure, for a true audit consists of something more than merely adding up figures in a column. When the accounts are audited, they should be presented to the Congregation at their annual meeting ; and afterwards printed, either *in extenso* or in abstract. In the published accounts of some Churches it is usual to omit the minister's stipend, but it is always best to make everything known. Frankness in matters of finance is the safest and wisest policy.

The question, how money should be raised for meeting the wants of the Church, is one of great practical importance. The true principle, of course, is that the free will offerings of the people should suffice. In addition to these we may, to some extent, recognize as legitimate, private endowments, left for the benefit of the Church, or some branch of its

work. In the case of Churches, rich in spiritual life, but too poor to provide all the funds needed for their work, the offerings of the people may be supplemented by the richer Churches. The Churches which are strong should thus help those which are weak. State, or municipal subsidies, all true Congregationalists condemn. Nor is it a sign of healthy life, when a Church resorts to bazaars, concerts, and the like, in order to eke out its scanty resources. When some special effort is being made, such as building a new church, or extensively repairing an old one, the objection perhaps is not so great. Even then, however, these methods of getting money are by no means the best.

Leaving out of view exceptional appeals, which are made to those outside the Church as well as to those within, we may consider the three following methods of raising money, as the most usual.

### 1. PEW RENTS.

In its old and unaltered form, this system had, at least, the merit of simplicity. A certain "rent" was charged, so much for a single seat, so much for a pew. The amount varied with the position, the best seats always com-

manding the highest price. All the "pew rents" went to the minister ; while the incidental and other expenses of the Church were met by collections, and subscriptions.

Although pew rents have not been wholly abolished, and some of their evils still remain, they have almost everywhere been greatly modified. The "rent" is not always fixed ; the seat-holder promising an amount according to his ability. Social distinctions are not allowed to determine where a man shall sit. In some cases, the word "subscription" is substituted for "rent." In many Churches also, seats are appropriated on the understanding that each worshipper is in his place, at latest, when the service begins, otherwise the seat will not be reserved.

## 2. WEEKLY OFFERINGS.

(a.) The Envelope System.— This method is a simple one. It can be adopted either with, or without, an appropriation of seats. Each person promises to give as much as he can afford each week. Sometimes, at the beginning of the year, a printed paper is given to each subscriber, on which is a list of the objects for which money is wanted ; such as the Public Worship

Fund, Choir Fund, Sunday School, Foreign Missions, &c. ; and asking each person to name the sums they are willing to give, for these purposes. The income to be derived from collections taken at the public services is of course additional to these promises. One feature of this system is, that no one but the subscriber and the secretary who keeps the account, knows the amount subscribed by any one person. The envelopes are marked by a number only, which corresponds to a number in the Weekly Offering Cash Book. At the end of each quarter, a printed receipt is given for the amount subscribed, and also a Notice of Arrears.

There are many advantages in this method. The wonder is, indeed, that it has not been much more widely adopted, especially in the smaller Churches. The real objection to it is, that it involves trouble ; and in the larger Churches, at least, the work would be considerable. Still, even in a large Church, the system has the advantage of bringing the whole Congregation into personal contact with the officials, and thus making organization easy.

(b.) *Loose Money.*—Perhaps most Churches, which adopt the method of taking a collection

each Sunday are content with the simple plan of passing along each pew, a box, bag or plate, at some time during the service. The great advantage of this plan is, that it entails no great trouble, and leads to few unpleasant mistakes. No elaborate accounts are needed, and no receipts have to be given. The disadvantage is—on the part of the subscriber—that all is left to the promptings of the moment, and on the part of the Church officials, that this method does not enable them to obtain a list of those in the Congregation. In the matter of giving, many require a little moral pressure to bring them up to the standard of duty. They will readily enough put in a much smaller coin than their incomes would warrant, if they can do it unobserved ; but if they are expected to make it known, though it be to a person who is pledged to secrecy, they will be shamed into doing what is right. For this reason also, if envelopes are not used, open plates, for use at the collection, are to be preferred to either bags or boxes. The risk of this system is that incidental expenses may unduly increase, while general objects receive diminished contributions.

**3. MIXED PLANS.**

In many Churches, when it is not found desirable to adopt exclusively any one of these three methods, an arrangement is made for taking something from each. Seats are appropriated, but each seat-holder fixes the amount of payment himself. The amount, so determined, is called an offering, and is not regarded as rent. According to convenience the offering can be made weekly, monthly or quarterly. The amount is enclosed in the usual envelope, with its distinguishing number, and deposited in the collection plate. Some persons prefer to put money into the plate, unfettered by any promise or formality, and as they feel moved to do at the moment.



## CHAPTER VII.

### Church Buildings.

The buildings in which a Church carries on its work, bear a very close relation to its well-being and prosperity. Obviously the Church is of much more importance than the material structure in which it finds its home; yet we may infer the character of the Church from its building, just as, to a large extent, we are able to judge a man from his clothes. The building is indeed the clothing of the Church, and will not fail to indicate some features of its life. If the building is dirty, and much out of repair, it will suggest a cold and lifeless Church. If it is inadequate to such a work as the needs of the district demand, it will probably shew a Church wanting in spirit and enterprise. In many cases, of course, the Church has inherited the existing buildings from the past, and whatever their

defects and limitations, is obliged to be content with them very much as they are; but when it is possible to erect new buildings, or make extensive alterations in the old, the Church has an opportunity of shaping for itself a fitting home—an opportunity of which the best possible use should be made.

The first thing to be done, in a work of this kind—apart from raising the needful funds—is to select a good committee. It should not be too large, but sufficiently representative, and should be composed of men of good sense and practical wisdom, who are not above taking advice, and, while sufficiently careful, are by no means timid. If some of them have good taste and a practical acquaintance with building operations, as well as knowledge of architecture, it will be of great advantage. They should all of them be men of business ability; but especially the secretary and treasurer, upon whom the greater share of the work must fall.

As soon as the committee is appointed, it will be needful for it to determine three important questions:—Where to build; what accommodation to provide; and, how much money to spend.



## 1. THE SITE.

The question of a site is very often determined for the committee by circumstances ; but where a choice is possible, the greatest care should be taken to get the best available. A bad site is an evil legacy to a Church, and is a mistake which cannot afterwards be rectified. The site chosen should, if possible, be in a prominent position, and central to the district from which the congregation is to be gathered. It should be on a dry soil, and sufficient in extent for all the requirements of the Church prospective, as well as present. A good site can seldom be bought cheaply ; but it is wiser to spend a thousand pounds on a good site, than one hundred on a bad one.

## 2. ACCOMMODATION.

This should be ample. Besides the Church, rooms should be provided for the minister, the deacons, and the choir. For the two latter, perhaps, one large room might suffice. There should be a Church parlour, and separate cloak rooms, with lavatories, and all needful conveniences for men and women. A lavatory, &c., in connection with the minister's vestry, should not be forgotten. The Sunday School also

should have ample accommodation. The large room should be made suitable, not only as a place of assembly for the children, but also for tea meetings, lectures, concerts, and other gatherings of the kind. A kitchen and scullery, with a large copper for heating water, should be provided. There should also be as many class rooms as circumstances permit, with a bright cheerful room for the infants. If possible a room should be built for such social and other gatherings as are too small for the large school room, but beyond the capacity of vestries or class rooms. *All* this is perhaps not needful for *every* Church, and some unfortunately are compelled to do with much less, but every item in the list is desirable for most Churches, and essential for some. Other buildings, such as a Manse for the minister, and a house for the caretaker, are very desirable additions to the Church premises, and should be provided whenever possible.

### 3. Cost.

The committee should very carefully consider the question of funds. The matter should be faced with manly courage. Timidity, and over-cautiousness, often lead to serious mistakes.

To a very large extent the question of cost should be determined by the accommodation required, and not *vice versa*. To reduce the plans until they become defective, in order to lessen the cost, is not wise. Better wait a few years longer, than do the work badly. The questions, therefore, of a good site, and ample accommodation, should come first; and these settled, then should be decided the question of expenditure. Sometimes a financial difficulty is met, by having plans prepared with very great completeness, but omitting in the actual building those portions which can best be spared, leaving them to be erected at a future time.

Before proceeding any further with the work, the Committee will be wise to consult with the officials of the English Congregational Chapel Building Society. This Society exists, not only for making grants of money when needed; but also for giving, what in this matter is of equal value, good practical advice. If monetary help is wanted, such consultation is a necessary condition, without which no help is given. But even if a grant of money is not expected, the practical advice given, in the choice of an architect, the

examination of the plans, &c., and in settling the terms of the builder's contract, will be of great value, and, most likely, will prevent many serious mistakes being made.

Whatever designs are submitted by the architect, should be subjected to the most careful and painstaking criticism. No detail should be overlooked ; and every point should be examined from the standpoint of both utility and taste. In this examination, it is well to put aside for a time any perspective drawing, which the architect may have supplied, and study well the ground plan and the sections. It will then be seen how far the accommodation needed is supplied, how the various rooms are placed in relation to one another, and whether the means of access, from one part of the premises to another, are sufficient and appropriate. It should be carefully considered whether the position given to particular rooms is convenient, in view of the purpose for which they are designed. The sanitary arrangements should be carefully noted, and also the means of entering and leaving the building. The doors, vestibules and staircases should be carefully studied, with a view to the avoidance of any possibility of panic ; especially in those parts of

the premises in which public assemblies will be held.

In examining elevations, &c., two important points need attention—sufficiency of light, and of air. There is often a difficulty in the way of securing good ventilation. Doors and windows should be so constructed as to avoid draught. For the inlet of fresh air, there should be a sufficient number of inlet tubes along either side of the building; and for the extraction of vitiated air, Boyle's Air-pump Ventilators of adequate power should be placed in the roof. As far as possible, the mechanical appliances for ventilation should be made to work automatically; although no invention has yet been made that will entirely supersede the necessity for personal judgment and care.

Another point, in regard to which the committee will need to exercise the greatest care, is that of acoustics. In many cases, beautiful and costly buildings have been erected, in which it is difficult to hear, and painful to speak. When that strange something, which we call "an echo," haunts the building like a mocking fiend, all the money lavished upon it is so much wealth wasted. This is a matter on

which competent professional advice is important. A design, which to an unprofessional committee may seem the very thing they need, may appear quite the opposite to the expert.

A word or two may be said here on the style. The architecture of most new Churches built during the last thirty years, has been Gothic. Not only is this a beautiful style, but being mainly English, it is suited to our climate, and to the genius of the English people. It is at the same time a flexible style of architecture, and therefore capable of being well adapted to Congregational purposes. But in spite of all this, ministers often long for the plain old conventicle; which if ugly to the eye, was yet so kindly to the preacher, that his faintest whisper could be heard. The fault lies not in the style, but in the architect. It is wise no doubt to study with a loving care the beautiful tracery, the delicate carving, and the fine proportions of some ancient minster. But a Congregational Church is not a minster, and there must be some defect in the training of the architect who omits to notice that important fact. It is not a place for ecclesiastical processions, or the intoning of prayers; but a building in which a man's voice

should be heard in the remotest corner, uttering the solemn truth of God in plain honest speech. The architect must design a building in which every man shall see the face of the preacher, and catch every tone of his voice. When these two essentials have been secured, he may make his building as beautiful as he pleases.

Only one thing more needs to be said. Let the building be of sound materials and good workmanship. If economy is necessary, let it be shewn in the sacrifice of what is merely ornamental. A building, perfectly adapted to its special purpose, if of good proportions, must be pleasing to the eye. If it be otherwise, no amount of ornament will redeem it from being a failure. In every case, excess of ornament should be avoided. A good architect will exercise severe restraint in this respect. But it must not be supposed, that good workmanship and sound materials, even if the work be plain, can be had cheaply ; nevertheless the money spent, is well spent. Cheap buildings are always dear, and are a legacy of trouble and annoyance to those in charge, when they have stood a few years. The money saved in a cheap building is expended thrice over in a

few years, in repairs which ought never to have been needed.

Whether a building be old or new, it needs to be kept in thorough repair. It would be a wise thing for most Churches, to put aside every year a sum, as large as they could well make it, as a building fund, out of which repairs might be paid for; the unexpended balance in one year being carried on to the next, allowing the fund thus to grow until the need should arise for such repairs as would absorb the whole. It would be wise to give the buildings a careful examination at least once a year; and put everything right that might be out of repair. This should be done in the summer, before the autumn rains, and the winter's snow. All gutters, shootings, and drains, should receive careful attention, and outside wood and iron work should, at the proper time, be repainted. Gas fittings and heating apparatus should be examined, from time to time. If the buildings are surrounded by an enclosure, the space within should be carefully kept. If it be laid down with grass, the grass should be well mown; all shrubs, if there are any, should be properly trimmed, and some flowers planted in the borders. If the space is covered



with gravel, the gravel should be free from grass and weeds, frequently raked over, and from time to time renewed. If a Church building is not in itself sacred, it is put to sacred uses ; and as a decent man would feel himself disgraced if he neglected his home, so a Church might well feel shame, whose buildings are out of repair and forlorn of aspect through neglect. That which gathers round it all the sacred and beautiful associations of worship, until at times it seems to us the very gate of heaven, might well claim a share in our solicitude.



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